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FEATURING

GIFT FROM THE STARS

An Amazing Novel

By
**EDMOND
HAMILTON**



A THRILLING
PUBLICATION

THE LIFE MACHINES

By MANLY WADE WELLMAN

THE GOLDEN BARRIER

By G. T. FLEMING-ROBERTS



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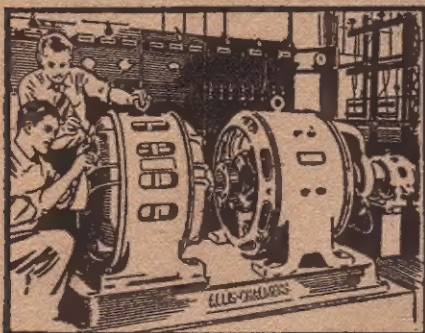
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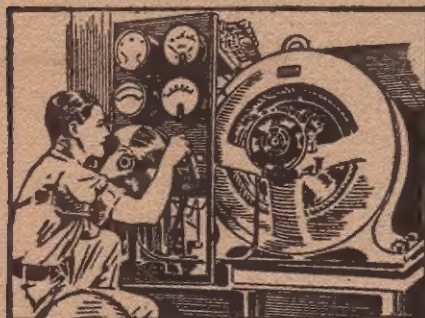
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SCIENTIFICTION'S LEADING MAGAZINE

THRILLING WONDER STORIES

The Magazine of Prophetic Fiction



Vol. XVIII, No. 3
December, 1940

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● ON THE COVER

The cover painting by E. K. Bergey depicts a scene
from Manly Wade Wellman's novelet, **THE LIFE
MACHINES**.

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**Chief Operator
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Before I completed your lessons, I obtained my Radio Broadcast

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I am now making from \$10 to \$25 a week in spare time while still

holding my regular job as a machinist. I owe my success to N. R. I. W. M. F. RUFF, 611 Green Street, Bridgeport, Pa.



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Many Radio Technicians Make \$30, \$40, \$50 a Week

Radio Broadcasting stations employ operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers and dealers employ installation and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make \$30, \$40, \$50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make \$5 to \$10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, Police, Aviation, Commercial Radio; Loud-speaker systems. Electronic Devices are other fields offering opportunities for which N. R. I. gives the required knowledge of Radio. Television promises to open good jobs soon.

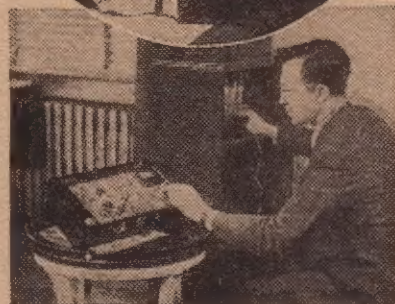
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Find Out What Radio, Television Offer You

Act Today. Mail the coupon now for sample lesson and 64-page book. They point out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tell about my training in Radio and Television; show more than 100 letters from men I trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Find out what Radio, Television offer YOU! MAIL COUPON in an envelope, or paste on a postcard—NOW!

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BROADCASTING STATIONS (top illustration) employ Radio Technicians as operators, installation, maintenance men and in other fascinating, steady, well-paying technical jobs. **FIXING RADIO SETS** (lower illustration) pays many Radio Technicians \$50, \$40, \$50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make \$5 to \$10 extra a week in spare time.

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Table of amount of insurance purchased by a monthly payment of one dollar.

Attained Age at Death	Natural or Ordinary Accidental Death Amount	Auto Accidental Death Amount	Travel Accidental Death Amount
1-40	\$1000.00	\$2000.00	\$3000.00
41-50	750.00	1500.00	2250.00
51-56	500.00	1000.00	1500.00
57-62	300.00	600.00	900.00
63-68	200.00	400.00	600.00
69-75	100.00	200.00	300.00

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City State



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"The lessons are so simple. I have learned to play by note in a little more than a month. I wouldn't take a thousand dollars for my course."

*S. E. A., Kansas City, Mo.



PLAYS ON RADIO

"I am happy to tell you that for four weeks I have been on the air over our local radio stations. So thanks to your institution for such a wonderful course."

*W. H. S., Alabama.



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"I've always wanted to play the piano accordion," writes "H. B. from Canada. "But thought I'd never learn it. Then I read about your lessons. I don't know how to express my satisfaction."

Music Lessons for less than 7¢ a day

Here's your chance to learn to play your favorite musical instrument—quickly and easily—in your own home.

YOU thought it was expensive to learn music? That it took lots of money to pay for a private teacher, sheet music and all the other essentials? That it required years of study?

Then here's grand news for you! You can learn to play your favorite musical instrument, any instrument, for less than SEVEN CENTS a day! That's ALL it costs. Not a penny extra for sheet music or anything else. And it doesn't take years, either.

Play a Tune in One Lesson

Actually, you start playing a familiar melody in your very FIRST lesson. Then you go on from one tune to another, until your friends are surprised to hear you play.

You learn to play by *playing*—just as you learned the

English language by speaking it. There is no lost time, no waste motion.

You learn by a remarkable short-cut method! A modern, simplified method that skips all the tedious, old-fashioned study and practice. A method that has literally swept the world, enrolling over 700,000 pupils. It's actually FUN to learn music this easy way.

Easy as A-B-C



Look at the notes above—they are F-A-C-E. Could anything be simpler? You are already learning to read music. And it's easy to play, too, for a remarkable invention, the "Note-Finder," tells you just where each note is located on the keyboard.

Here's the Secret

"A picture is worth a thousand words," says the ancient Chinese



proverb. And that is the secret of this easy and fascinating way to learn music at home in spare time. Your lessons come to you in print and picture form. Large, clear illustrations show you every position, every move. And the accompanying text is like the voice of your teacher at your shoulder, explaining, coaching and encouraging you. You can't go wrong.

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See for yourself how easy it is to learn your favorite musical instrument this modern, short-cut way. And how inexpensive. Mail the coupon below, checking the instrument in which you are interested. Do it now. Instruments supplied when needed, cash or credit. U. S. School of Music, 29412 Brunswick Bldg., New York City. Forty-second year. (Est. 1898)

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Piano	Mandolin	Trombone	Piano Accordion
Violin	Saxophone	Banjo	Plain Accordion
Guitar	Clarinet	Ukulele	Hawaiian Guitar
Cello	Trumpet	Coronet	Other Instrument

Have you instrument?.....

Name

Address

City State

☐ Check here for Booklet "A" if under 16 years of age.

*Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by Professional Models.



BEWARE—there's an Ice Age ahead for Mother Earth!

Professor F. X. Schaffer of the University of Vienna has predicted that within 2,000 years the Earth will be facing the start of another ice-age similar to those which interrupted the progress of mankind during the Pleistocene epoch.

Professor Schaffer bases his prediction on the fact that temperatures tend to fall as the continental blocks on the Earth's surface rise. A rise of 600 feet in a continental block would lower the average temperature one degree Centigrade. A decline of three degrees Centigrade in Scandinavia would start another period of glaciation in Europe.

During the last 50 years Sweden has risen almost an inch a decade, and during the last 34 years Finland has risen almost three inches a decade.

THE GREATEST INVENTIONS

WHAT are the greatest American inventions? The United States Patent Office has granted patents for more than 2,000,000 inventions since its inauguration. Recently, in an effort to select the nineteen outstanding American inventions of all time, a committee of seventy-five technologists examined the most important inventions of the last three centuries. Here's the list of winners—nominated for Science's Hall of Fame. (Pick your own mental list before looking!)

Eli Whitney	Cotton gin
Robert Fulton	Steamboat
Cyrus Hall McCormick	Reaper
Samuel F. B. Morse	Telegraph
Charles Goodyear	Vulcanization of rubber
Elias Howe	Sewing machine
Christopher L. Shole	Typewriter
George Westinghouse	Air brake
Alexander Graham Bell	Telephone
Thomas Alva Edison	Phonograph, incandescent lamp, motion pictures
Nikola Tesla	Induction motor
Charles M. Hall	Aluminum process
Ottmar Mergenthaler	Linotype machine
Wilbur and Orville Wright	Airplane
Lee De Forest	Three-electrode vacuum tube
Leo Baekeland	Synthetic plastics
William M. Burton	Oil-cracking process

THOSE MYSTERIOUS ELECTRONS!

How small is an electron?

Pretty small! Scientists know a good deal about the electron, its properties, reactions to certain stimuli, etc. But nobody has ever seen an electron!

To give you an idea of the incredible infinitesimal size of the electron, Westinghouse research physicists, who smash atoms to learn more about matter, give us the following analogy:

If an electron and an orange could both be magnified until the orange reached the size of the Earth, the electron would still be invisible!

COLORED SMOKE

Science is playing a part in enhancing the sophistication of the fairer sex!

Milady of the future may soon be smoking cigarettes giving off blood-red smoke, or any other color of the rainbow. The ladies of tomorrow will be able to exhale smoke that matches the color of their clothes, jewelry, purses, etc.

It's all done through the miracle of chemistry. What will the wonder boys think of next?

THE FLOATING COIN

Did you know that the law of averages can be repealed?

Suppose you dropped a silver dollar into a tumbler of water one day and found, to your consternation, that the coin did not sink—but floated!

According to our conception of atomic science, such a happening is not impossible. Here's why. The coin is composed of countless atoms speeding in multiple directions at once. By pure chance, there is always the possibility that some time in all eternity the atoms might all jump the same way simultaneously. The law of averages tells us that. And, wonders of wonders, when that day comes the coin will refuse to sink!

How remote is this possibility? Jean Baptiste Perrin, the mathematician, has figured the chances. According to his calculations, this defiance of the natural laws can happen just once in the number of years represented by one followed by ten billion ciphers. So you can safely bet against it!

THERE'S NOTHING NEW

Everything's been done before!

That's the claim of M. Wilned in his book, (Continued on page 125)

Let me help you give fine
I'll trust you - I'll give you
10 MONTHS to Pay

GIFTS

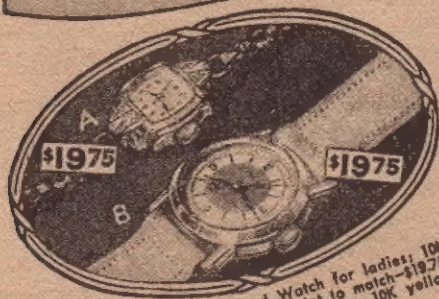
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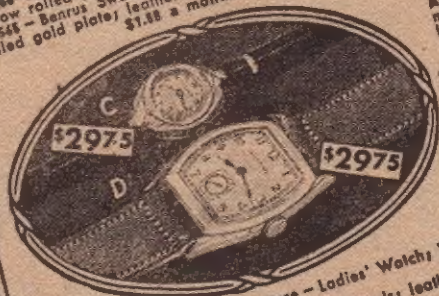
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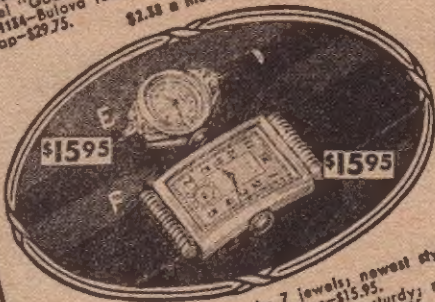
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B-8544-Benrus Sweepsecond for men; 10K yellow rolled gold plate; leather strap. \$1575.
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D-M184-Bulova feature for men; 17 jewels; leather strap-\$2975.
\$2.88 a month



E-P159-Ladies' Kent Watch; 7 jewels; newest style 10K yellow rolled gold plate case-\$1595.
F-K190-Man's Kent Watch; 7 jewels; sturdy; new style; 10 yellow rolled gold plate case-\$1595.
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A265-Engagement Ring; large diamond and 2 other diamonds; 14K yellow gold. \$4.75 a month



A84/C75-Bridal Set; 8 diamonds; both rings 14K yellow gold. \$3.15 a month



M84-Man's Initial Ring; dia-
mond and 2 initials on Black
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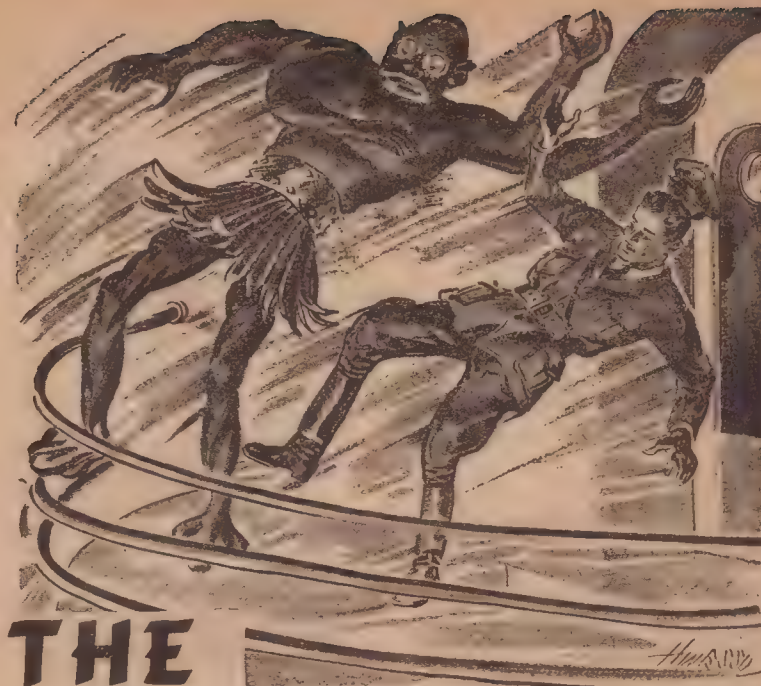


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THE LIFE MACHINES

By MANLY WADE WELLMAN

Author of "Giants from Eternity," "The Worlds of Tomorrow," etc.

CHAPTER I

Out of Nothing

THE bearded man in the captain's uniform looked up from the machine he tinkered with. Entering the laboratory was Lieutenant Graves, trim-mustached and stern, of Company G, 200th Science Research Battalion, U.S.A. With him were four private soldiers of the Battalion, all science-specialists first-class, but now carrying sidearms. The bearded man

knew them—Kelso, Rubins, McGowan, and Warwick.

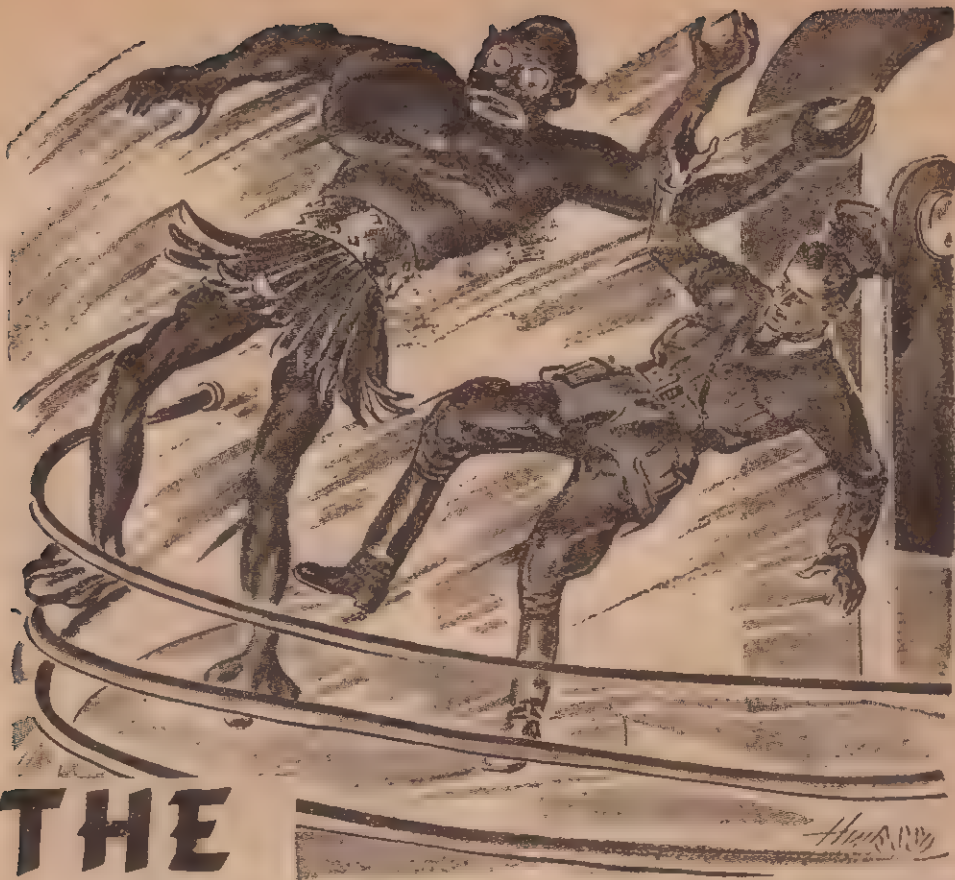
"Gentlemen," he said sternly, "it's against regulations to disturb a scientist at work on experimental projects."

"You are under arrest, Captain Davisha," Lieutenant Graves stated.

The man addressed as Captain Davisha dropped a hand on the hilt of his own saber. Instantly the soldiers had drawn their pistols. The captain subsided, and made a little bow.

"Very well. I am Captain Daoud Shah, of the Asiatic Army Intelligence,

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A COMPLETE NOVELET OF THE FUTURE

surrendering. I had fooled you, eh, Lieutenant? But there is an Asiatic word for it—*Kismet*."

He spoke without an accent, but those who heard could recognize him now as a high-caste Moslem gentleman, a fine officer who could make considerable trouble for the Western Powers just now. For it was November 13, 1978, sixth month of the Third World War. Events were going much too well for the Asiatic Confederation, which had bafflingly gained a foothold in California and was fighting to tear down the defenses along the Rockies.

Lieutenant Graves saluted with the utmost respect for his captive's shrewdness and gallantry.

"Your beard should have given you away, sir. Scientists rarely wear beards in this country, except in fiction. But you acted so businesslike, slaving over this new freeze-ray machine, that you can't blame us for thinking you genuine."

"Ah, yes."

Daoud Shah laid his hand on the apparatus in the center of the laboratory floor. It looked like a huge Coolidge tube on a standard, rimmed around with small ray-sending units.

"I worked on it, frankly, because I hoped to do permanent damage to your forces and arms. It is an improvement, however, on the freeze ray. That is only a theta ray, which merely paralyzes mechanical action. We of Asia have progressed to the iota ray. Shall I demonstrate?"

"Paralytic action of what sort?" asked Lieutenant Graves eagerly.

The others were also fascinated. It had been a mistake to send scientists on the arrest detail.

"Gather close," purred Daoud Shah. "This power completes the process of locking atomic action. It stops all electronic motions. Whatever substance has been defined by such motions, when rayed, is destroyed—vanished—to all practical purposes."

Graves nodded. "I see. The atoms are made to stand silent. The solid body becomes a mere cloud of tiny particles, less palpable than a gas, eh?"

"Exactly. It is done—like this!"

Daoud Shah swept his hands over the switches. A ray glowed briefly.

And Daoud Shah, the lieutenant, and the four soldiers seemed to snap out of existence.

WHERE the laboratory had stood was grass, smooth and unstirred. The grass grew in the midst of the great, strange city that had grown up since man had departed from Earth and machines had taken over. That was because a scientific mystery hung about the spot, a mystery that the life machines were now going to solve, after so many centuries.

AB-706, of the life machines, rubbed oil on the structure of glass, wire and metal that he had planted upright in the center of the grass. Somewhere under the grass and the earth it grew on. Spread and accumulated there by centuries past counting lay the secret of six human beings.

Few enough of men's records had descended to this age, but here was one. It had always been known that the ray-thrower, whatever it was, had made them vanish. But it could also make them come back. AB-706 had been directed to restore the device and find out what it was. He had found out. More, he had found that by reversing the ray-action at the very spot where once it had been invoked, certain electronic motions that so long ago had been stilled would begin again. Men would return to Earth.

The Thinker, ruler of the life machines, needed human beings. Once it had seemed that machine minds would succeed in a world where human minds had failed. It had turned out otherwise. What was it that men did with their brains that enabled them to progress to scientific triumph? That could be discovered only with living specimens of humanity.

AB-706 shifted the standard of the ray-thrower once again. This must be the exact point where it had stood in the past. Ranged around it would be six masses of atoms—atoms that stood absolutely still in a world of moving particles, like so many ethereal clouds, invisible, intangible, yet not lost. He calmly turned on the ray. Now, as so long before, the particles would be involved. Unemotionally AB-706 reversed the power.

THINKING about it later, Peter Warwick, Private First-class, was rather surprised that there hadn't been unconsciousness, not even a blur of the wits. One half of one instant, he was in the laboratory. The other half, he was out.

"Warwick!" Lieutenant Graves was shouting.

"Here, sir."

Warwick came to salute. He seemed to be buried up to his knees in grass. No, he was in the turf where the grass grew. Quickly he kicked loose. Others struggled up, as from ill-made graves, first Rubins, then MacGowan, and finally Kelso.

"Disarm the prisoner, Warwick," Graves ordered. "If he touches that ray mechanism again—"

"Please," said a strange voice, soft but deep. "We have not restored you to active existence for you to battle among yourselves. Battle destroyed mankind in the first place. Now it threatens machines."

They wheeled and stared at the speaker. Where had he hopped from? He stood by the iota-ray thrower, as Daoud Shah had been standing. Was it just an instant ago? He was tall, almost naked, chocolate-colored, with huge, piercing eyes and a froglike mouth. He was absolutely hairless, and had four arms.

"I welcome you human beings back to life," the creature said. "Good fortune enabled us to restore your ray-thrower and rescue you. I am AB-seven-o-six. And I said you are not to fight!"

Graves and Daoud Shah had drawn their sabers—dress weapons, but dangerous in skilful hands. Disregarding the order, they began to slash at each other. The creature that called himself AB-706 leaped at them with dazzling swiftness. Two of his hands flashed out, each seizing a saber blade. Warwick waited for him to let go, terribly cut. But the next moment, AB-706 had wrenched the weapons from the two duelists.

Quickly he broke one, then the other, across his knee.

"There will be no more fighting among you," he pronounced. "You are—"

Graves shouted a loud command. Warwick, closest to the four privates, sprang at AB-706. His fist swept upward to drive under the shallow chocolate jaw. Immediately he retreated with a howl. His knuckles felt as if they had been smashed to gruel. But AB-706 did not seem even to have felt that uppercut.

"You are too few and valuable to be allowed to damage each other," he went on. "You are the only living human beings on Earth."

That statement took the fight out of his hearers. They gaped at him. Graves spoke tremulously.

"Say that again. The only living human— But there are billions!"

AB-706 folded one pair of sturdy arms and bracketed the other pair on his hips.

"I understand your impression. That was true in your former period of history. Since then, however, ages have passed. You have existed as static atoms, invisible, impalpable, virtually non-existent. Meanwhile, all of your kind has vanished from Earth. We have just rationalized the strange ray that modified your substance. By reversing its action, we have restored you to existence."

"But," interposed Daoud Shah, "if there are no human beings, what are you?"

"I am AB-seven-o-six," was the reply, "a machine of small importance. All around you"—he gestured widely with his four hands—"are the Lift Machines."

They gazed around blankly. The grass on which they stood made no more than a meadowlike space in the midst of a towering city, humming like a swarm of gigantic bees.

"I shall take you," said AB-706, "before the Thinker, who rules this world."

He conducted them to the edge of the meadow, where great metal bulkheads shut off the city on all sides.

"This place was kept untouched for ages," he explained. "You see, the mystery of your disappearance had pre-occupied science for centuries. The original building from which you vanished has long been covered with earth and grass. Indeed, as you observed, we had to bring you back underground,

and let you fight your way out."

"How did you know about us?" asked Graves.

"Numerous records were discovered, dating from the days of men, concerning efforts to bring you back. We machines carried on the problem. There was only a guess in the records at what had happened. But not until we completely rebuilt and reconditioned that ancient atom-locking device did we know how to go about restoring you."

Through a doorway he conducted them, and then into a great metal capsule that stood balanced upon a single gleaming rail, which led into a dark tunnel.

"Subway," he explained tersely. "There are seats within for you."

Inside, after they had sat down in the dim, windowless vehicle, AB-706 touched a lever. They sped away.

"How far do we go?" asked Graves.

"To the community that was called New York by human beings, at the eastern ocean. It will be a six-hour trip."

"Six hours!" exclaimed Daoud Shah.

He had gasped in wonder, but AB-706 interpreted the tone as expressing contempt.

"We could go more swiftly in an airplane," he said, "but that is dangerous. We of this country are attacked by those who live in the South. They demand more land, more mines, and oil, and other things by which they can live."

"By heaven, so there are still wars!" muttered Warwick.

AB-706 nodded. "There have always been wars. There will always be, as long as there are factions, and one refuses to reason. It will be well for me to explain something of the history of the Earth since you ceased to be aware—or died, as men expressed it."

CHAPTER II

The Thinker

AB-706 spoke simply, clearly. Man-kind, as he explained, had made tremendous progress in times that now were dim to the machines. They had

even rocketed to other planets and colonized them. But wars had gone on, each more dreadful than the last, until weapons had been devised so deadly as to wipe out the last of human life on all the planets.

"Then we—the machines—were left to rule," finished AB-706. "Perhaps the same fate will overtake us. It is undoubtedly a bit of good fortune that we have lost track of man's more deadly devices. All we have is what the last men would have considered primitive—guns, bombs, planes, tanks—"

Warwick gazed at the speaker in wonder. Of course, those weapons that had been modern to him would have seemed primitive to the men of the fortieth century. He considered it interesting talk from a robot, though AB-706 wasn't his idea of a robot. "Machine-man" had always conjured up a thought of something gleaming, jointed and ponderous, halfway between a bad dream and an intelligent suit of armor.

It was true that in 1977—the winter before the war—Warwick had taken a course in natural philosophy that had touched on the subject of machines. Old Dr. Julius Dexter had spoken of "tremendous advances" in robot engineering, but Warwick had set down the boast as the hope-so of a venerable worshiper of science. But how long ago had 1977 been?

"Lieutenant, sir, may I ask him a question?" Warwick queried. When Graves nodded, he addressed the four-armed controller of the speeding car. "Say, Mr. Abie Svenozix, how long have we been out of things? It was November thirteenth, nineteen-seventy-eight—"

"I am sorry. So great a time has passed that I cannot identify your period." Apologetically AB-706 spread his four hands. "There were so many wars. I cannot identify your war, nor which army won it. In ages to come, it will be similar. None will know who won the approaching battle between the Thinker's machines and the Other."

"Are all machines like you?" asked Daoud Shah.

"There are about five hundred thousand of us, who can think and act independently. There are others of the kinds you knew—vehicles, tools, manu-

facturing equipment, and so on. I am constructed in the human form, because we find it most able. Humanity had the brain, speech, the hand. No machines ever improved upon them."

Daoud Shah turned wryly to his fellow-men.

"Since our war is so long over, why should there be not peace among us? Desperate for fear of a spy's shameful death, I made a violent attempt to escape the torture of waiting to die. Can we have peace?"

Graves nodded and extended his hand.

"But I was clever, eh?" Shah grinned. "The atom-locking ray was a true triumph of Oriental science. In fact, that was what won us our foothold in California."

"I wondered how you managed it," said Graves.

"Quite simply. Our agents arrived in parachutes, carrying the machines. We rayed the inhabitants of Los Angeles out of existence, and established our bridgehead there."

Warwick leaned forward, his military manners forgotten.

"You did that?" he snarled. "Destroyed all those people, because—"

HE broke off in sudden agony, thinking of June Cowell, whom he had known at the University. She was from Los Angeles—taffy-haired, ready of smile—and they had talked earnestly about marrying. But there had been the war, and she'd joined the Medical Corps at Los Angeles—

"But, Warwick," Daoud Shah was protesting earnestly, "if we had not done so, they would all be truly dead. Now, however, they live, as if in another dimension. The machine which our friend AB-seven-o-six has restored to working order can bring them all back. It will be fair-sized community."

"That's right," agreed Kelso. "Say—"

"I fear that you ask too much of the device," stated AB-706. "It can furnish the ray only briefly hereafter, to restore perhaps as many as you from those you speak of."

Warwick did not listen beyond that point. His heart had begun to pound, and his imagination was running wildly.

They emerged in a great metal-lined hall, where stood several grave replicas of AB-706—Abie Svenozix, as Warwick had named him. One of these came forward, bearing a tray.

"Will this material satisfy the human beings?" he asked. "Such synthetic nourishment was made and eaten by men in their final epochs."

Eagerly the hungry soldiers ate cakes and pellets of strange but satisfying consistency, jelly, and drank a refreshing blue liquid in metal cups.

"The Thinker, who knew you were coming, ordered it prepared," went on the waiter. "Now he commands your presence."

Abie Svenozix conducted them to an elevator. In it they rode up, watching floor after floor drop by the open doorway. Warwick saw endless machine shops, furnaces, storage spaces.

"We're going up forever, I guess," he said finally.

"This community, New York as men named it, is arranged in a single great building," explained Abie Svenozix. "It is cubical in shape, half a mile each way. Such a dwelling would be impossible to human beings, but we machines have no problems of hygiene or food supply . . . Come, the top floor at last. We leave the elevator."

He led them into another hallway.

"Face the Thinker without mental reservation," he urged. "He expects to find you useful. If he does, you will be allowed to live."

"You sound as if you want to be our friend," said Graves.

"I am a machine. Machines do not know friendship, but I am interested. Having restored you to existence, I would not like that trouble to have been for nothing. Pass through that archway. The Thinker waits."

They entered by twos—Graves and Daoud Shah at the head, then Kelso and Rubins, and McGowan and Warwick. Beyond the arched doorway was a small railed space, like a balcony above a pit. The six could just stand there without crowding, above a great chamber larger than a ballroom, with dim lights and no windows. A lofty ceiling was discernible, and a floor well beneath them. The chamber was filled with whirring machinery.

To Warwick, the net effect was one of terrifying complication, yet incredible order. Wheels, belts, levers, bobbins, smooth-sparking terminals, glassed-over ray devices, cogs, globes of light, a thousand other devices. Everything moved and whispered in rhythm. As the men stared, a voice rose above the noises, quiet but penetrating and measured.

"You find me strange, but no more so than I find you. Perhaps your strangeness will profit me and the machines I govern."

"We hope so," ventured Graves diffidently.

"That is false," was the hushed, measured reply. "You hope only that you will be allowed to live comfortably. I can receive your thoughts as well as your spoken words. How strange and mysterious are the ways of men. They practise deception, argument, equivocation—all dishonesties beyond my understanding, which I thought was complete."

"Allah alone is all-knowing" corrected Daoud Shah.

"I am considering having your brains dissected, for the education of my scientists. You recoil when I voice that thought. But in the world of machines, all individuals must be of clear and measurable use, else we eliminate them."

"Have you brought us here to torment us?" demanded Graves, his lips white beneath the trim mustache. "It is easy to be cruel when you are strong."

"I am a machine, and do not understand your human talk. What is it to be cruel? Oh, I see. You impute emotion to me. Emotions died with men, and are now restored along with men. I wonder if that is dangerous—Perhaps I should not allow it to exist."

"You went to trouble enough to restore us," Graves replied. "Producing the power that would set our atoms in motion again and bring us back into existence certainly couldn't have been easy. Why did you do it, then?"

"Expecting to profit from you." The machine's voice sounded actually tired. "Man, being a rational being of nature, might enable us to progress. Machines cannot advance, but must remain what

they were created. Man was adaptable, fresh of judgment. We hoped to learn and gain those traits from you. We forgot that you are emotional, deceitful, changeable. It was trouble, yes, and I am beginning to think it was trouble taken for nothing."

Graves scowled. "You should have thought of that before bringing us back to life. Now you cause us only useless agony by condemning us a second time."

"Agony?" repeated the Thinker. "What is agony? You men use many words that are beyond the understanding of machines."

Listening, Warwick leaned on the hand-rail. His thoughts could not turn from June Cowell, for he knew she still existed, in atom-locked suspension, until someone with the restored engine located and freed her. While he was obsessed with that thought, nothing else could stir him deeply.

"Go, all of you," the Thinker was saying. "All except the man whose name is Warwick. He alone does not fear me. He may speak with me reasonably."

The others obediently left the chamber. Warwick stood alone on the balcony above that great mass of moving mechanism.

"WARWICK," the voice began, "I have already said that you and your companions have been restored to be of possible help to me and my people. You are fighting males. There is a fight upon this world now. Years ago, for experimental purposes, a second Thinker mechanism was built in the southern part of the world. As it gained power, it drew adherents to itself, and became what we call the Other.

"Its community feels that it needs the things my community commands in plenty—notably metal and fuel. And so, to force its demands, it has caused to be created many machines of war, more than I have at present."

"That is an old story," replied Warwick. "It happened many times in human history—a poor and savage government threatening a rich and more peaceable one. But how does this Other expect to gain what it wants, if

you machines will not argue or compromise or feel fear?"

"By destroying me and my government," was the Thinker's casual reply. "In my place, you would consider that a calamity. But, being rational, machines do not feel the human fear of destruction."

"Why do you refuse to give them metal or oil?"

"Because the Other seeks to make a powerful empire of machines, many and complicated, while we seek to preserve our resources to keep the world alive and reasonable as long as possible. We have no desire to exist ourselves. But the principle of existence, to be carried out by machines that will succeed us—"

The voice broke off.

"You cannot grasp that, I learn. It is the supreme rationality. A machine is put into existence to operate in a certain way, to do a certain task. That task must be done, if not by the individual machine, then by another. It is abhorrent that the task will cease to be done."

"It's merely mechanical instinct," said Warwick. "Let me speak, if possible, on a level you can comprehend. To your way of thinking, without bringing in hate, fear, or ambition, it would be well if the Other were defeated."

"Exactly. But he has more planes, more guns, more weapons of every sort. The war will be won by the strongest."

"Not at all," denied Warwick. "Weaker but wiser forces have often won. Why not surprise him, trap him?"

"What is surprise?" asked the Thinker. "What is trap?"

"Let him think he's winning," Warwick tried to explain. "Bring him into a certain course of action, which he thinks will be successful. Then attack him in a place and along a line he has neglected."

"I do not understand you," broke in the Thinker, somewhat wearily. "Even if I did, I fear it is too late. For I sense the warnings of my outpost. An invading force is approaching swiftly—"

There was an explosion, as of all the world. Warwick was hurled backward through the archway. He landed in a sprawl among his comrades, dazed. Someone was lifting him up.

"You hurt?" Rubins asked, as from far away.

Warwick shook his head violently, to clear it. He saw Abie Svenozix striding to the doorway.

"It was a bomb," said Abie Svenozix, in the maddeningly calm way of machines. "The roof-plates are thin here, in order that the Thinker may detect outer signals and trends more easily. The Other must know that. He has dropped a heavy explosive charge, damaging the Thinker badly."

GRAVES rushed to the Thinker. "The machinery is still going," he said excitedly. "Hey, Thinker! Are you badly hurt?"

He received no answer. Abie Svenozix turned quietly to him.

"I am a machine, so I cannot understand your emotion. Why should this armed dispute involve you, who are human beings?"

"Because we are confined in a place which may be destroyed," snapped McGowan. "We may all be killed."

"If you are killed," said Abie Svenozix, "what then? How will anything matter to you?"

He shrugged his chocolate shoulders, and walked down the passage. Warwick hurried after him.

"Listen, Abie," he called, "what are you going to do?"

The machine man turned and gazed at him tranquilly.

"Do?" he repeated. "About what?"

"This attack. Listen!"

Another shell struck, shaking the walls and the floor.

From the direction of the doorway to the Thinker's chamber came a cry from Kelso.

"Hey! They hit us again. Graves and Daoud Shah were inside there!"

"I am going to do nothing about the attack," Abie Svenozix was informing Warwick levelly. "It is not for me to take initiative. The Thinker must give his orders, by telepathy or by mechanical signal."

"But the Thinker is wrecked!"

"It was not my doing."

"Listen, Abie," said Warwick, breath-heavily in suppressed anger. "Can I at least get to where I can see what's happening?"

"There is nothing irregular in that request."

Abie Svenozix moved away toward the elevator. Warwick followed him into the car, which whisked them high up into a tower.

CHAPTER III

Battle of the Blind

WARWICK could look out upon the roof of the mighty cubical building that was New York. It was a flat, square expanse of dull metal, in which he could see no joinings, seams or other inequalities, except certain blisterlike projections spaced in regular ranks. These seemed to have ports or windows.

"Those are turrets that have recently been added for observation and defense," volunteered Abie Svenozix, as if reading the question in Warwick's mind. "But I doubt if they will be of more than partial defense value, unless augmented by armed planes. There they are."

From somewhere beneath the roof level, probably from hangar ports, rushed a great flock of flying shapes, red and white in hue. To Warwick, their shape was nostalgically familiar. They were not too greatly modified from the twentieth century form of a plane, but seemed much swifter and more maneuverable. Rising like a swarm of locusts, they suddenly dashed toward the green and distant horizon. As the two in the tower watched, the whole fleet vanished from sight.

"Why did they do that?" demanded Warwick. "Where's the sense behind it?"

"The orders of the Thinker. He can control them by thought."

"But there was an attack a moment ago, and now there will be more," protested the man. "What's the matter with the Thinker? Why doesn't he keep his planes here to defend his city?"

"Perhaps the explosion has deranged his mental processes. Those ships probably are crashing somewhere."

Warwick turned and clutched Abie Svenozix by the shoulders. The com-

position of the machine man was as hard and unyielding as seasoned hickory.

"Abie," he pleaded, "let's get together on this. We can do something about it—make a fight, die with our teeth in a throat, anyway. Because—"

"It is not our part to take the initiative," Abie Svenozix replied calmly. "Do not trouble yourself, Warwick, over a fate you cannot avoid."

Warwick spun around and made a clutch at the elevator controls. Abie Svenozix put him off with one incredibly powerful forefinger.

"You must not meddle with this machinery."

The soldier's right hand went to his belt holster. Whipping out the gun, he aimed at his companion.

"We're going down," he said harshly. "Down to where I can talk to a whole mob of your sort, stir them up. Start the elevator or I'll shoot."

"Shoot? Is that little thing a gun? It can never hurt a thing of my substantial construction."

Warwick fired. The heavy slug struck Abie Svenozix in the middle of his broad brown chest. It knocked him flying into a corner. Warwick leaped to the controls. Fumblingly he shot the elevator down.

He stopped at last, picking a floor at random. There was a vast hall, in which strolled or lounged a throng of creatures like Abie Svenozix. As he rushed out among them, they turned and eyed him with a calm interest that had nothing of human curiosity.

"You are one of the human beings," said a machine. "We thought that you were being kept under close guard. The accident to the Thinker must have freed you."

PAINFULLY Warwick drew a deep breath, trying to choose his words.

"Listen to me, you Life Machines," he attempted at last. "Danger is threatening you—this city—everything you have done."

"That is neither new nor surprising," one of them said gravely. "We had information of the raid of the Other's forces some time ago."

"Well, are you going to take it with-

out fighting back?" demanded Warwick. "Destruction's all around you. Aren't you going to resist?"

Another machine man opened his mouth wide. It seemed to Warwick that he was yawning, though he may have been drawing oxygen into whatever combustion chamber gave him power.

"We are not fighting machines," he said. "Other things—planes, guns, tanks—do the fighting. Our tasks are meditation, experimentation, handicrafts, supervision. We do not understand your talk of fighting."

"But if the Other destroys this whole place and melts you all into slag?" demanded Warwick more loudly. "What then?"

"Nothing then," said the first speaker.

Abie Svenozix came sauntering from the direction of the elevator, as though nothing had happened to him. With one flexible fingertip, he pried loose the flattened lump of lead. It had knocked him over without piercing his impenetrable hide.

"Warwick, you are acting like a being with no reason," he said reproachfully. "What do you want?"

"Only to stir you up," Warwick fairly wailed. "Only to show you that there is no sense to quitting without a struggle."

"There is no sense to quitting with one," Abie Svenozix declared.

But Warwick did not wait to hear his argument. He rushed to where, against the wall at one side, an airplane was parked.

It was the size of a twentieth century solo fighting job, compact and handsome in its red-and-white enameling. At its front were set rapid-fire guns. Underneath the body, bombs were slung. Like every soldier of his era, Warwick knew how to operate planes. He sprang at the hatchlike door, pulling it open. Once inside, he would burst forth from the opposite port, rise into the air, battle alone against the threat that drew nigh—

"You cannot hope to fly that plane," said Abie Svenozix.

The control cabin was full of machinery, complicated beyond Warwick's understanding, yet completely without motion.

"The planes can be operated only by thought-power waves from the Thinker," explained Abie Svenozix. "If he has been damaged and has become faulty, there is really nothing left to do. Nor do I see how this incident need involve the risk of your existence."

"I only wanted a chance to fight for my life," groaned Warwick. "Well, have it your way, Abie. Will you take me back to where I can watch the curtain come down?"

"That request has nothing irregular in it."

WARWICK was young, but he had become soldier enough to know how little he could hope to see of a battle. High on the tower, he gazed at a sky that was filling with airplanes, black and countless.

"Those are the flying forces of the Other," said Abie Svenozix beside him. "They have far more planes than we—five or six to one, and fully as swift and dangerous."

"They're bombing all around our roof," blurted Warwick.

"Yes. We have constructed defense outposts in a ring around the main section. You cannot see, but they can. They are destroying them."

Gleaming silver-white objects, by sixes and sevens, were dropping from the planes as they hovered and circled about the great structure that was New York. Explosions blasted far below.

"Why don't our defenses fight back?" asked Warwick. "Is it strategy?"

"They, too, depend on the Thinker, who has been rendered helpless," said Abie Svenozix.

"No. He was able to send away the defense planes. He's crazy, perhaps. He certainly was shaken. But he's not helpless. Look! One of the enemy ships got it then."

The machine-man turned motionlessly to watch a black plane fall in a blaze, then another. The fleet had been about to wheel from bombing the silent defenses and concentrate upon the city itself. But now it swung ponderously in a great circle above and around the limits of the roof. Bombs rained down.

"Hmmm," breathed Warwick medi-

tatively. "Slow stuff. You say that the ships respond to thought-impulses from their master, the machine you call the Other. He took time to change orders then. You could almost hear his gears grind."

The man grinned wryly.

"He operates more smoothly than our own Thinker," contradicted Abie Svenozix, with nothing of disrespect, only the quiet manner of one considering all items. "He has nothing to fear from us if he is rational and inexorable. He knows it."

"For the last time, can't we fight back?" demanded Warwick. "Smack those planes hard! Confuse them! Get them off balance and drive them back—"

"Nobody will be driven away in this battle," Abie Svenozix replied. "We cannot retreat, and the Other's forces need not. As to the individual problem in conflict, there is none. You keep forgetting that we are machines, without personal aims or fears. This battle will cease only when we are completely wiped out."

"Then why not surrender and be done?"

"What is surrender?" asked Abie Svenozix.

Warwick realized that he could not explain. It was like a mighty chess game, with the most pieces and the best strategy on the side of the Other. Probably Abie Svenozix and those duplicates of him were quite right in considering the deadly struggle impersonally. But Warwick, a creature of instinct and inheritance and not of manufacture, must consider it with his heart as well as his brain. He could not blot out the will to live, to fight for self-preservation. . . .

"This will be the end of you, and you spinelessly accept it," he retorted bitterly. "Well, I can't."

The machine looked puzzled.

"That is beyond my comprehension. When it is the end of me, it will also be the end of my awareness. Why should I fight to prevent what I will not know? You, also, will be nothing, as you were when the iota ray dematerialized you. Why consider the prospect to be worth the trouble of struggling?"

SNORTING in disgust, Warwick turned back to watch the battle. The invader planes had ceased their bomb-dropping circle. Now they were moving to converge upon the central edifice that was the machine city of New York. One swooped low over the flat roof, hovered a few feet above the metal surface. Something dropped out of its interior. Was it a big bomb?

It was a surface vehicle, a cross between a tank and an armored car. Rumbling, it began to roll forward toward a defense turret, flashing brilliant gunfire.

"Kangaroo planes, like those in the twentieth century!" exclaimed Warwick. "They carry tanks, drop 'em at the heart of invaded country—Abie, you still say there aren't intelligent beings in those machines?"

"None. Each has a mechanism which, before being sent off, was fueled, timed and set for its specific job. The Thinker or the Other has general command and direction of them. All of this campaign was planned before one plane had taken to the air. You saw how difficult it was for even a minor change in tactics to be achieved. It is a good campaign, though simple—the application of a superior force to a disorganized defense. I cannot see how we will survive."

Chess, that was it, and Warwick was even more helpless than a pawn. How could he hope for aid from these automatically logical machines? Then there was a red and white gleam on the far horizon.

"We're putting up a battle, after all!" he cried, pointing. "Look over there, Abie. Red and white planes. Aren't they ours?"

As he spoke, a flight of ships—a tiny swarm indeed, compared with the sky-thronging force of the black invaders—was speeding toward the city. Every cockpit and turret was blasting flame toward the enemy. The black planes were forming up, slowly and clumsily again, to meet this slender but unforeseen token of resistance.

"How can we hope to attack from without?" Abie Svenozix asked rhetorically. "There, at least, you cannot accuse us of mere mechanical logic. Had our air force remained here, to fight

close above its base, we might have prolonged the conflict a little. We might even have convinced the Other that he must pause in his effort to conquer. Truly the Thinker's mental powers are damaged. Cut off from our own hangars, our fleet—"

After the black ships dropped dozens of tanks upon the roof of the city, they formed into squadrons, heading in perfect formation for the red and white fleet.

Warwick, despite himself, nodded. Abie Svenozix was right. Logic alone might have saved New York, the city's machine population, himself, and his comrades. Thrown out of mental gear by that bomb, the Thinker was in a condition amounting to insanity. He was virtually presenting the victory to the foe. Desperately Warwick tried to absorb some of Abie Svenozix's philosophical defeatism. . . .

CHAPTER IV

Triumph of Emotion

THERE was a rumbling roar, so close to the tower that Warwick dodged as though to avoid a sweeping blow. The invading ships drew off from New York. More planes cut across the city's wide roof, right upon the tails

of the enemy. They were red and white planes, the ships of the Thinker's defenses. These were the remainder of the force which Abie Svenozix had casually believed were destroyed by senseless crashing.

But the mechanical attention of the black craft was fixed upon a small force that had drawn in from one side. It could not turn at once in the opposite direction. Those artificial consciousnesses, controlled by a far-off genius of complex metal and electrical current, might have realized that destruction was astern. But the knowledge did not come quickly enough.

A withering fire assaulted the planes of the Other, at close range. Dozens fell in tumbling junk. When the black ships painfully managed to nose about, the attackers fled like winged hares, covering their retreat with gunfire from their rapidly vanishing rear cockpits.

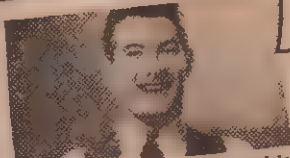
"I cannot understand it," Abie Svenozix stated unemotionally.

But Warwick could. Ripping his military cap from his head, he flung it up and cheered like a schoolboy at a football game.

"Damn good thing that bomb hit your Thinker!" he whooped. "It made him do exactly what I told him to do—surprise attack, with deception and reversal of mental fields. Abie, that's what's happening out yonder. Their

[Turn Page]

Mr. R--- makes a Confession



3 Feel like a million this morning. Ex-Lax worked fine. Didn't upset me or keep me awake last night... Boy, watch me tear into my work today!



1 Almost got fired today. Boss caught me napping at my desk. The trouble is I need a laxative. But I hate to take the awful stuff.



2 Tom told me to try Ex-Lax and I bought a box on my way home. Took some before turning in for the night. A cinch to take—it tastes just like chocolate!

The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet gentle! No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowel movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax next time you need a laxative. It's good for every member of the family.

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ships haven't any pilots to be frightened, but they're acting as though they had. Watch them!

"The invaders don't have human sense and prudence, or they'd have stayed to wipe out the decoy bunch that came first. They're chasing the second lot because they have time for only one idea. The first crowd has turned and is shooting their tail feathers out!"

The two forces, smaller and larger, of the New York air force, had adopted a tactic like that of two dogs with an ox. The stronger, but more clumsily rationalized enemy was automatically eager to make a fight of it. But by turning to assault one menace, it exposed its rear to the stinging attack of the other.

In the briefest space of time, the battle had whirled back to a point above the city. Black ships were falling like flies from an insecticide spray, while few of the red and white ships were struck.

"Hit and run—hit and run!" Warwick was raving. "Look, Abie, draw up a chair and learn something. Battle isn't only a matching of forces. It's also the matching of wits. Those black babies are being wiped out. No, the Other is seeing his error at last. He's making them retreat. But our gang is strafing them to pieces, following them along. Some are dropping down to wipe out those tanks on the roof."

A clear, sharp whistle sounded from somewhere. Abie Svenozix touched a control bar.

The elevator dropped, shutting the battle from their view.

"It is the summons of the Thinker," said Abie Svenozix. "Come. He wants us both."

THE balcony in the chamber of the mighty reasoning machine seemed more than ever a frail ledge above a mighty mass of dread power. Side by side, Peter Warwick and Abie Svenozix looked into the mixture of mechanism—smashed here and there, but whirring and grinding more loudly than ever. The voice that addressed them was somehow changed, but still resounding and masterful.

"You two went to see defeat strike

this place. You thought that I was helpless. Instead, you witnessed the defeat of greater weapons by my greater intellect. You doubted me."

It was an accusation. Abie Svenozix bowed his chocolate head almost to the hand-rail.

"I doubted," he confessed. "Punish me as you will."

"Warwick," said the voice that filled the chamber, "you saw what I did with the plans you offered, which you felt were too great for my understanding. I found them of use. If I were not a machine, I would say that I thanked you. But, being what I am, I only wonder if you have not done all that you can to help me."

Warwick drew up to attention. He sensed unfeeling disdain in the words. The mighty creature had picked his brains and used the pickings to advantage. Now it would get rid of him as though he were mere rubbish, cluttering the works of this cog-and-spindle world. Let it read his thoughts of rebellion and defiance, and let it read also that he feared nothing it could do.

"You are a machine, and cannot feel gratitude," he replied clearly, his voice sharp in the dim, humming chamber. "If you think I am of no use now, go ahead and destroy me."

"You do not beg for life?"

"I won't." But then Warwick thought of the other soldiers. "I make an appeal to reason only. I have five companions of my own race. You have not required or tested their useful knowledge. Let them live, see if they cannot give you help as I have."

"Enough, enough! Warwick, I can play with you no further."

That voice he *recognized!*

Beams played upon and around him and Abie Svenozix, from the depths of the machine mass. Again the voice spoke.

"Climb down here. No, do not pause and stare. I command you to descend by the ladder."

A beam shifted to show rungs descending in an orderly tier to the floor of the chamber. Abie Svenozix tapped his shoulder with a hickory-hard finger.

"Do as you are ordered," he whispered in Warwick's ear. "You have called me a machine and unemotional.

But I think I know what friendship is. I want you to survive, Warwick. Come. Obey the Thinker."

The chocolate figure swung down by the ladders. Warwick followed. A moment later they were on a lower level. Warwick could see a passageway among the wheels, banked coils and moving, whirring, grinding and clanking units. At the end, bathed in light, stood two figures that were—human!

"Come over here," called Graves. "It's only Daoud Shah and I. We're the Thinker now. It's perfectly simple. Humanity will rule the world again!"

AS Graves had said, it was perfectly simple. He showed Warwick and Abie Svenozix the smashed remains of a machine man—an ordinary machine man—in the center of the cockpit.

"We scrambled down here when the bomb struck," he explained. "The moment we saw this chap, ruined by the explosion, we guessed the whole business."

"The Thinker is an engine, a superstructure of reason and motive power, but no more than a superstructure. He needs an engineer. That's what our poor wrecked friend was. He had a head-receiver, vision screens, banks of levers. In the midst of machinery, this mechanical mind governed and directed."

Abie Svenozix's eyes seemed more protuberant than ever.

"You mean," he asked, "that this other machine man, an ordinary mind—"

"Could run the show?" concluded Daoud Shah from the controls. "Of course. He was speeded up mentally, just as a plane pilot is made swifter, or a crane operator made stronger, by the machinery he operates. Put yourself in the operator's place, and it all becomes logical, practical. So we took over."

Warwick began to understand.

"You've been running this Thinker machine?" he blurted.

Daoud Shah nodded. "We had to. Somebody had to, or it was all over for humanity. As soon as we put on the head-receivers—there are two sets,

probably in case one is damaged—we comprehended the powers and how to use them. It gave us telepathic understanding. We could read minds, see and hear from a distance, plan and direct."

"Warwick, your thoughts came to us as though spoken aloud," added Graves. "We knew what you had advised the Thinker to do to the assaulting forces of the Other. The Thinker himself, being only a machine man, could not comprehend. But we could. We took the advice and won."

"You won," Abie Svenozix stated calmly. "It is well. Now you control the Thinker. I was created to obey him—I and the others like me. We will obey you henceforth."

"You machines won't suffer, either," said Graves soberly. "We've proved, I think, that human emotions and mental directions have their value in leavening your mechanical rationality. We six, with the Thinker to empower us, will work for the good of all."

Head-receivers in place, he briskly supervised the mechanism, now and then touching a lever or button.

Abie Svenozix nodded his head at last.

"First men ruled alone, and failed. Then machines ruled alone, and approached disaster. The two together may succeed. But there are few of you. When you have perished, as all living things must perish—"

"*Bismillah!* That is true!" exclaimed Daoud Shah.

"Don't forget, though, that we can resurrect people from the Los Angeles area," reminded Graves. "You said that the atom-lock ray would give us back perhaps another six, didn't you?"

"Yes," said Abie Svenozix. "And it is my suggestion, then, that the six be young women, so that the human part of the new alliance may survive and increase. We can, if we take pains, locate specific personalities and restore them."

WARWICK felt warmth spreading inside him. He was thinking of a girl with taffy-colored hair, whom he had last seen in the Twentieth Century, before the war. Daoud Shah, too, was realizing the implications of that

situation. Orientally, he quietly rhapsodized:

"With the people of Los Angeles there perished a spy of our people—a woman, young, fair and lovely. I had thought to make her mine when the

war ended. Ah, at thought of her, my heart trembles!"

"You look too starry-eyed to take a lesson in running this job, Warwick," said Graves. "Go find the others and bring them here."



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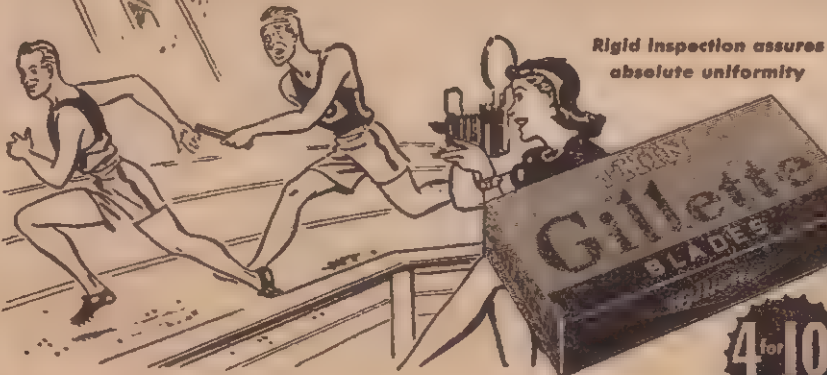
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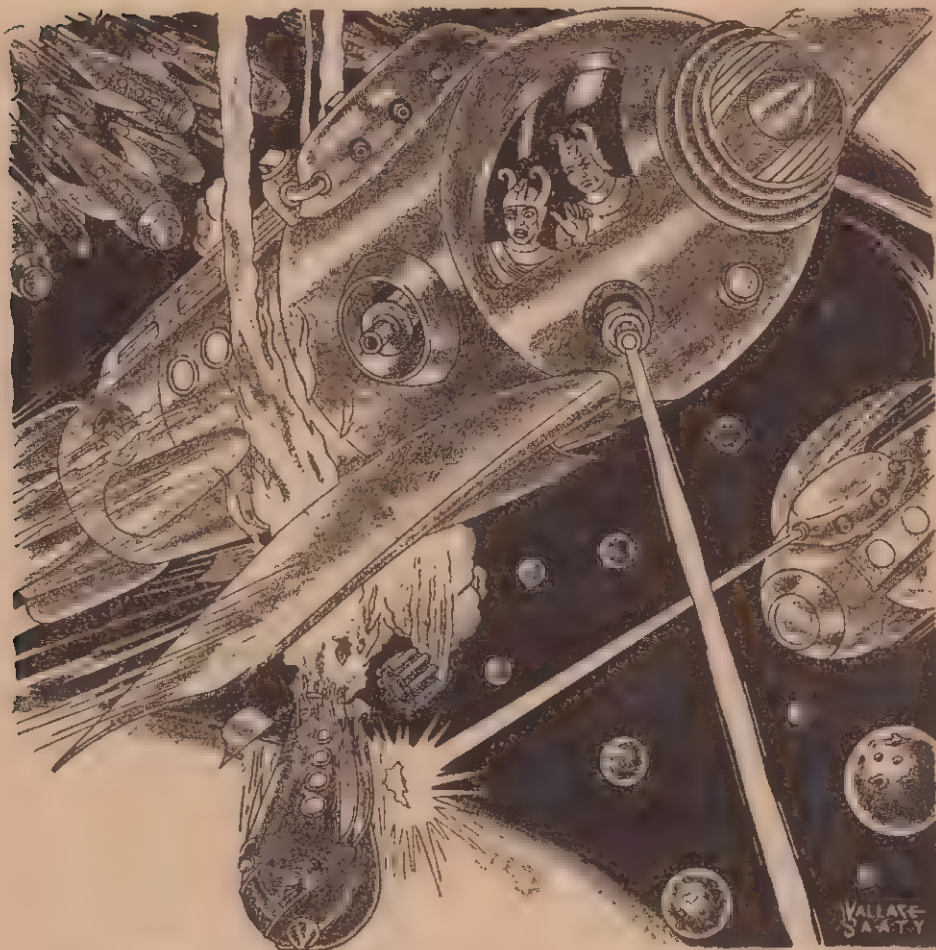
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EXILED FROM EARTH

By **SAM MERWIN, JR.**

Author of "The Scourge Below," "Physician, Heal Thyself," etc.



The lumbering armed transports of Earth stabbed vicious rays at the invaders

The Man Without a World Hated the Planet That Banished Him —But He Couldn't Let It Die!

INDECISIVELY Andar Sammeth moved toward the miraculously comfortable metal-mesh upholstered chair. He couldn't make up his mind whether he wanted to sit down or stand up. He stared worriedly at the chair, as if the question of sitting or standing were the largest problem he had ever faced.

Sammeth made an impatient gesture. Instead of doing either, he smiled uncertainly and picked up the gray, two-legged, round-bellied Venusian apret.

"I'm really getting old, Fortar," he said.

The apret, his only companion in the space ship, turned a light blue in sym-

pathy. The apret's strange, extra-terrestrial metabolism gave it the super-chameleonlike ability of changing its color to correspond with its emotions.

"I always talk to myself, and now I waver between standing and sitting," Sammeth went on. "Little, finicking problems keep driving the important ones out of my senile mind."

Stroking the queer, affectionate beast's warm, smooth skin, he walked slowly to the port.

"One hundred and fifty-five years of looking at space, Fortar. I remember how I stared, thrilled speechless, on my first trip into the void. It still hasn't changed—a century and a half are really nothing to the cosmos, though it is more than three-fourths of my entire life. But the Sun, the stars, the planets, the whirling moons and tumbling asteroids, the distant nebulae—they're still as terrifyingly majestic as ever. They haven't lost a fraction of their awesome grandeur. It's just that after a hundred and fifty-five years, they bore me, stifle every creative impulse in me. Fortar, I want to go home—back to Earth."

The apret clasped its almost human hands over its fat little stomach and turned a sympathetic darker blue. Sammeth nodded miserably.

"You know how I feel. I wish human beings were as sensitive to emotions as you. But in spite of their callousness, they're my people. God, how I miss their voices, the very sight of them! I want my home planet under my feet, the blue sky over my head. More than anything, though, I want crowds around me. I—I want their respect again. . . ."

For Andar Sammeth had once been great among mankind. He had commanded the entire Interplanetary Transport System. He had given the orders that guaranteed life for his native planet. His ships had carried metals, minerals, food, finished products from world to world, expanding the commerce that alone kept Earth from starvation. And as his work had grown in importance, his domineering pride had swelled.

Defeatedly, Andar turned from the enormous blankness of black space, in

which the points of life were almost lost. Isolated, impertinent sparks of brightness, they only made the void seem more overwhelmingly empty. For Andar was a man without a world.

HE shuffled to the chair, sank heavily into it. He stroked the apret, which lay pallid in his lap. As he stroked the Venusian animal, he saw the thick veins on his hand, the glistening skin that wrinkled even when it was taut. He was old—older than a voluntary exile had a right to be. Madness or suicide should have claimed him after a century and a half of aimless wandering in space.

"But I was right, Fortar!" he insisted furiously. The apret sprang to its tiny feet on his lap and turned a startled green. He stroked it back to calmness. "I still claim I was right. But I would be the last to gloat if history justified me. I only hope it won't be too late when Earth finds it out. There was time to change the system when I left. Perhaps they have changed it. . . ."

Was he a natural rebel, or had the system really been so intolerable? He didn't know. He only knew that the inflexible social order had irritated him since the first moment of his success. Then he must have been the misfit, for everybody else accepted the dictates of society.

He had proved his capability by managing the transport system, one of the highest positions outside the Central Rule. But society decreed that each Central Ruler could hold office for no more than twenty years, after which he must go on to his next assignment.

Andar Sammeth, though, had been perfectly happy where he was. Interplanetary Transport's history, during the period of his command, was greater than any it had ever had. Logically he should have become general secretary of the Central Rule. If he had done that, he would have been one of the Central Rulers sixty years ago.

"But what good would that have done them?" he asked petulantly. Fortar turned mottled in bewilderment.

"Exactly. I don't know either. After all, I was able to develop Mercury for our use. I was the only Earthman who could understand and deal with the Mercurians. Those fierce apes wouldn't tolerate anybody else. Well, what did the Rule want me to do—give up a job I was doing well, so I could bungle another that I didn't know anything about? At least I could have kept Taumis satisfied."

Taumis, still the Mercurian chief, had almost been a friend to him. But Sammeth had recognized the driving energy of the Mercurian, knew that if it weren't diverted, it would cause trouble for Earth. That was why he had argued to remain in his job. He wanted to maintain direct charge of the Mercurian development.

"Oh, the dirty back-biters!" he mused in bitter memory. "The Central Rule had the right to argue. They're just hidebound, refuse to move with the times. There was all the justification of precedent behind them when they insisted that I move on to my next job. But the rotten little snipers who whispered that I wanted to stay there for personal profit—"

He gritted his teeth in helpless rage. Fortar assumed an angry scarlet.

"I told them, all right," Sammeth grinned savagely. "I got up in front of the Central Rule and let them have the truth. 'If the work I've done for my planet can make my fellow-men suspicious of my motives,' I said, 'I don't want any part of my fellow-men or my planet. I renounce both!'"

Somehow, though, the brave words seemed more pathetic than heroic. When he recalled the years that had followed, he shuddered, and Fortar turned pure white. The Central Rule had warned him that his voluntary exile would be permanent. There could be no return to Earth. Sammeth had merely stalked from the meeting, provisioned and equipped his little ship, and taken off to become a lonely wanderer among alien planets.

"One hundred and fifty-five years," he muttered. "A century and a half of utter aimlessness, a man without a world, without roots or incentive . . . I want to go back. I must return be-

fore I die. But Earth won't let me come back!"

EVERYTHING conceivable for human comfort and entertainment was to be found in the teardrop hull of Andar's compact ship. He even had a televisior set, but it picked up programs only within short range. He could receive nothing but the occasional super-powerful Solar Network broadcasts. His vast micro-film library contained more titles than any other private library in the System. Now and then he had been able to visit the less populated planets, though Mercury, of course, had been included in his banned area.

Even with these distractions, life had grown dull for him. He tried to convince himself that Fortar was a better and more sympathetic companion than a human being. He knew he was rationalizing. There was no substitute for human companionship. . . .

For a hundred years, he had worked almost steadily on a single invention. With it he could analyze any object that passed within ten miles of his ship. But he had analyzed the spectra of so many cosmic particles, he could tell by merely looking at the bands of colored light exactly what they were composed of. For almost twenty years he had lost the thrill of knowing that he had invented the *Andarscope*.

He glanced casually at the star map, which automatically registered his position in space. Looking at it was a reflex that had been conditioned by his long years of astrogation. The ship was drifting between Venus and Mercury, with its solar batteries busily recharging. To avoid homesickness, he usually kept out of Earth's orbit. But the slow radiation of the ship's heat in space required gathering more.

He sat still for several minutes, his hand at rest on Fortar, who now was an unhappy light blue again. Then he got up uncertainly and looked around for something to do. There was nothing with which he could occupy himself. He could only shuffle over to the port and stare out at space.

Abruptly he felt a tingle of excitement. Far off to his right, moving with incredible swiftness, a string of light streaked toward him. They grew brighter, huger, more impressive. It was the entire convoy fleet of Interplanetary Transport.

"There goes my own idea," he mused. "I thought it up myself. Every two years I sent them on a good-will tour of the planets, to show them just how powerful Earth was. I had them travel all lit up, but the other planets knew that in battle they'd be dark, silent destroyers. And they've kept up the show of force even though it was my idea. If they'd had any sense, they'd have known all my ideas for Transport were good."

HE started the rocket motors, shot into the path they were taking. They passed in formations of a hundred, the nearest ship no more than ten miles away. He saw the sealed tubes through which fierce death would spout in combat. He pursed his mouth in disgust when he saw that only one improvement had been made on the original design of the ships. They had some trivial caudal attachment that slightly augmented the rocket power.

"Is that what they call an improvement?" he sneered. "I'll bet it's the only one."

He trained his Andarscope on the fleet. The bands of colored light showed not a single new material in the manufacture of the patrol ships.

"They wouldn't be static if I still headed Transport," he stated. "Even if they don't need new weapons, there still has to be progress. I'd have pushed out for other systems, and at least one of them would be bound to resent it."

Fortar leaped to his shoulder. Together they stared with homesick, disapproving eyes at the disappearing fleet.

Suddenly they saw a flash of light outside the port. The little ship jarred violently. Sammeth sprawled to the floor. Fortar smashed into a corner and staggered to his feet, yellow with shock. The old man scuttled to the

port, saw dark, jagged shapes hurtle toward his teardrop space ship.

Sammeth lost his fright then and hurried to the controls. It had happened before. They had merely drifted into the orbit of a small cluster of asteroids. One of the flying rocks had bumped against their ship. It was unpleasant, but not actually dangerous.

He set off one quick burst from his stern tubes, cleared the meteor swarm by several miles. Then he returned to his chair. Fortar, now a glowing pink, jumped back into his lap. Purely by reflex, Sammeth glanced at the Andarscope. A puzzled frown creased his wrinkled brow.

"What the devil's wrong with the machine?" he muttered. "It should register nothing but metals and a few minerals. Say, Fortar . . ." The Venusian animal looked up, an anxious yellow-green. "That's the pattern of a human being. No—it isn't. It's almost like a human being. . . ."

He prodded his encyclopedic mind, trying to identify that pattern. It was familiar, yet he hadn't seen it in years. What was it?

"Of course," he breathed, smiling in sudden relief. "That's the pattern of Mercurians." His smile faded swiftly. He leaped for the port. "What's a Mercurian doing in a meteor shower?"

He scanned space for sight of a Mercurian space ship. There was none in sight, of course. Mercurians were not allowed to have space ships.

But he stared at the fading colored bands. They were certainly the pattern of Mercurians! Then the spectroscope went blank as the swarm moved away. Puzzled, he gazed after them. What was the explanation?

Without hesitation, he took the controls, blasted after the meteors. Keeping clear, he traveled parallel, gradually drawing level with them. The baffling pattern again flashed on the Andarscope screen.

"What is it, Fortar?" he asked uneasily, straining his eyes at the tumbling, lifeless, jagged rocks. "Maybe I shouldn't kick, but it doesn't cheer me up at all. The exercise for my

mind is probably good, after so many years of idleness. I don't know. I still don't like it. Why should the screen pick up the pattern of Mercurians, when it's impossible for Mercurians to be out in space?"

The Venusian animal grew mottled with bewilderment.

"You said it," Sammeth stated determinedly. "This certainly has to be investigated."

Without hesitation, he returned to the controls and rocketed after the meteors. As he drew near, he was careful not to collide with them, but his attention was really fixed on the spectroscope screen. The puzzling pattern was growing clearer.

He forgot his homesickness as he pondered the problem. The meteors were crossing the orbit of Venus, moving rapidly away from the Sun. And no matter how hard he searched the swarm, he found no sign of a space ship—yet the pattern was indisputable!

After several hours, he eliminated the possibility of a Mercurian in space. His invention must have broken down. Perhaps the proximity of the Earth fleet had upset its delicate mechanism.

"Yes, I guess that's what must have happened," he said. "It always was a tricky little gadget."

Fortar remained an uncompromising scarlet.

"Well, I have to have some theory!" Sammeth protested. "I know it doesn't sound too good, but it's better than figuring out how a Mercurian pattern is where it shouldn't be." He turned away in shame. "Oh, all right. I'll try to get the answer. You're probably right—I'm not the incessant prober I used to be. How could anybody be, after a hundred and fifty-five years of exile?"

Fortar began fading to a pleased pink and leaped to Sammeth's shoulder. Suddenly the little Venusian tugged his ear. He looked at the spectroscope screen. The pattern had vanished without warning!

"Now what the hell—" he started to demand.

But Fortar had turned an excited

red and was pointing a short paw aft. For a moment, Sammeth saw nothing. Abruptly he leaped for the controls, sent the ship into a sharp spin. The Mercurian pattern glowed vivid on the screen. At the same time, a craggy meteor hurtled overhead, barely missing the ship.

"What's going on here?" Sammeth cried. "This little ship couldn't attract a huge hunk of rock so violently. . . ."

HE broke off in alarm. The meteor was doing something he had never seen before. It turned in a swift curve and rushed back at him with vicious speed!

"That's no meteor!" he snapped. "That's a disguised space ship!"

Fortar glowed a quizzical yellow.

"I know," Sammeth replied. "There has to be a reason for it. What's the reason, though? It looks like a military trick, but war has been outlawed for centuries. Yet that pattern is definitely Mercurian, which means the ship is Mercurian, also. And it's not only a subterfuge—it's attacking us!"

The Venusian animal remained a questioning yellow.

"I suppose we showed too much interest in it," Sammeth explained. "And being so close to the Earth fleet couldn't have been an accident. It didn't attack them, so it must have been planted there for observation—"

He stopped theorizing. The disguised ship was streaking straight for his.

"Hold on!" he shouted. "We're going to take a partial collision!"

The little ship jarred violently, was crashed far off its course. Quickly Sammeth released his rockets, sheering off on a deliberately faltering path. But he shut off the rockets almost immediately.

"That'll fool them," he said grimly as he picked up Fortar and shuffled to the rear port. "They're going in for tricks, so we'll show them a few of our own. We're not saving fuel. I just want them to think we were rammed into helplessness."

He saw the disguised ship turn

again and follow his aimless course. But the Mercurian seemed suspicious and kept on his tail for several minutes. Sammeth began to wonder if his deception had worked. But at last the other ship veered off.

He studied it carefully as it vanished. Then he went to his library and projected a System map on the screen.

"I don't understand it," he protested to the watching Venusian. "That ship's headed straight for the Moon!"

Fortar moved nervously on his shoulder, flickering green and blue alternately.

"Yes, I know. It might as well be Earth itself. The whole thing ties up neatly, but the solution's cockeyed. Mercurians aren't allowed to have space ships, yet they attack us in space. The fleet is out of the way, which means Earth is defenseless. It does look a lot like an attack on Earth, doesn't it? But don't worry, old pal. We'll find out what it's all about."

Driving the ship at full speed toward Earth, he pondered the problem further. The peculiar coincidences all seemed to fit together into an attack on Earth, yet there were many flaws in that theory. The inhabitants of the hot planet were extremely energetic. They could adapt machinery and run it efficiently. But they had always lacked the ability to create.

When pioneers from Earth had first landed on Mercury, the natives had been living primitively. Food had always been plentiful, shelter easy to construct, clothing unnecessary. So the constant struggle for survival that mankind had had to fight was unknown to them, with the result that they had never needed creative ability.

The Earth Rulers showed them the advantages of modern civilization by erecting industrial plants on Mercury. But the natives were not permitted to have weapons, for the Earth fleet alone was the police force of the System. All lethal weapons were concentrated and carefully guarded in the enormous Earth arsenal in the center of the Sahara Desert, for use only in the direst emergency. Excepting individual paralysis ray guns, for protection in

exploring the Dark Side, the Mercurians were unarmed.

"I guess they still are," Sammeth mused. "Otherwise that scout ship wouldn't have let us escape."

SWIFTLY he was approaching the Moon. Beyond it lay his home planet, Earth. At sight of the beautiful blue world, his homesickness swelled to a gigantic yearning. He wanted to return to mankind, to be again a part of humanity. He longed for the wind on his face instead of manufactured air, the sounds of civilization instead of the silence of space, the friendship of human beings instead of deadly loneliness. . . .

Furiously he returned to his immediate problem. He didn't dare to think too long and too deeply of his voluntary exile from everything he held dear.

The Moon's far side was turned toward him, half lighted by the Sun. For countless eons it had been a major mystery to man, but now its ugly, pocked craters, pits and peaks were delineated on every System map.

Between his ship and the jagged surface, he glimpsed the craggy pseudo-meteor. It was streaking directly for the huge Menorian Crater. Had the crater been empty, Sammeth would not have been so concerned. He could have lowered to radio range and called the land forces of the Moon to surround the invaders.

But he saw the crater floor, dotted with tiny specks that blossomed into large shapes when he tremblingly increased the magnification of his vision screen. There were hundreds of rocket ships in close formation! Their resemblance to meteors did not deceive him. He knew the ships had been disguised purposely.

The whole diabolical scheme was clear to him now. The Earth Rulers had been unable to divert Taumis' violent energy. The old chief of the Mercurians had not had his natural volatility neutralized as Sammeth had demanded so long ago. Now he was planning to attack Earth while the fleet was heading for maneuvers around Pluto.

"There's only one thing he can do," Sammeth mused. "If he's really going to attack, he has to hit the arsenal in the Sahara. His men aren't armed, but they have got paralysis ray guns. If the old fiend succeeds in surprising the garrison, he has a good chance of capturing the arsenal. Then he'd be able to arm his own fleet and beat off the returning Earth ships. What happens after that?"

Fortar turned white with fear.

"I GUESS that's about how it would be," Sammeth admitted. "We know Taumis pretty well, don't we? He isn't exactly a sweet character. With that dynamic drive of his, he'd probably be satisfied with nothing less than complete domination of the System. Well, I warned the Rulers a century and a half ago, but that doesn't change matters any. Exile or no exile, I'm still an Earthman at heart."

Staring at Taumis' base of operations, he shook his head in grudging admiration. The old chief had been clever to use the far side of the Moon. Centuries ago, Earth pioneers had landed on the Moon to mine its vast deposits of metals and minerals. Great underground plants had been constructed and work actually begun. But the discovery of atomic power, and the exploration of even richer and much more pleasant worlds, had made the project obsolete. So the Moon was abandoned. Its far side was a perfect base—

"Too perfect!" he grated. "Fortar, we can't waste any time. We're the only ones who know about it. If we can warn Earth before the attack gets started, they can increase the size of the garrison, arm it powerfully, and watch for the invaders. The only way they can be overcome is by surprise, and we can eliminate that. Damn this radio! If I had a powerful set, I wouldn't have to worry so much about time. I could send my warning from right here. But I can't, so there's no use wasting time by howling about how little time there is."

He let out a startled shout. Fortar grew even whiter than before. There was no time at all. Squadron by

squadron, the Mercurian fleet was taking off into space from the Moon.

For another horrible moment, Andar Sammeth was paralyzed by panic. Old Taumis' fleet was flying to attack Earth! With the Earth fleet rocketing steadily toward the other end of the System, he was the only man who could do anything at all. But what could he do, alone in a small, unarmed space ship?

"They deserve it," he muttered venomously. "They deserve everything they get. I warned them a hundred and fifty-five years ago that this would happen. They had enough time to prepare, though that wouldn't have solved it. They could have let me divert Taumis with something more important but less dangerous. I don't owe them anything. I can fly out into space and live out the rest of my life in peace—"

His hand trembled on the controls. Fortar watched expectantly, his smooth skin mottled with indecision. But as Sammeth's hand lingered there, the Venusian made up his mind. He glowed an angry crimson.

Sammeth laughed aloud with relief. His eyes grew bright and young, and fatigue slipped from his hairless face.

"You're right, you little devil!" he said cheerfully. "You always seem to know what's best, don't you? Well, actually I don't owe them anything, but I can't deny my own race. If I had to see them exterminated—and I wouldn't put it past Taumis—I couldn't face the rest of my lifetime knowing that mankind was finished. No, we're going home. It'll probably be a noisy homecoming, but we won't mind that, will we?"

He grinned at the Mercurian fleet, which was maneuvering into battle formation. Coolly he fired all his stern rockets. The terrific blast sent the little ship zooming past the Moon, streaking toward Earth on its final journey.

He had expected his heart to swell at sight of the expanding planet. But he had not thought it would threaten to burst his chest, to pound blood into his head with dizzying force. Earth's lush continents and smooth oceans

were bathed in soft sunlight. He felt his soul reach hungrily for it. . . .

But he wrenched his mind from his longings, made himself think dispassionately.

"The attack's well planned," he said. "Can't deny that. The fleet can strike right for the Sahara almost without being seen. They flash from the other side of the Moon, streak directly for the arsenal, and unless somebody happens to have a telescope aimed at them, they won't be seen till it's too late. Taumis is thorough, too. He probably had spies working for years to find out the layout of the arsenal. So he has all the advantages of preparation, while I still have to figure out what a lone old man in an unarmed space ship can do to stop a whole attacking fleet."

His old ship was sturdy, but it was far from being the fastest thing in space. The attacking ships would have been much faster if they hadn't been hindered by the clumsiness of their disguises.

"They're just Earth ships, or duplicates of them," he reasoned. "Judging by the way they handle, the Mercurians didn't design them. Taumis must have had his Earth agents steal either the ships or the plans. That makes it harder. If he could do that, how well prepared are his agents on Earth?"

He didn't know, nor was there time to ponder the question. Earth was expanding at terrifying speed. He was flashing toward the atmosphere with deadly swiftness. He had to slow down before striking it, or the friction would melt the thick hull to liquid metal before it came within five miles of the ground.

He grasped the bar that fired the forward jets. His arm tensed, waiting for the last possible moment of safety before braking.

He felt the little Venusian tug at his ear, saw him point at the stern. Looking back, he saw the Mercurian fleet, a string of ominous meteors racing for Earth. He knew then that he didn't have a chance. For, even as he watched, they grew larger, closer, more frightful.

"**L**ORD, what a spot!" he muttered bitterly. "Even if I could get to Earth before they did, I'd still have to convince the Rulers of the danger. Then they'd have to rush reinforcements to the arsenal, if they did believe me, which they probably wouldn't. Why am I fighting their battle? I could still be safe . . . Damn them! Damn them! Why didn't they listen to my warning? Why couldn't I appeal to the people over their heads?" He fell silent, biting his lips as the tears sprang to his eyes. "But that doesn't matter now. I couldn't die peacefully if I couldn't be sure that humanity would survive me. How can I save the future of the race?"

The answer came to him so suddenly that his eyes went blank with astonishment and his hands convulsively clutched the controls. He shook his head swiftly and laughed aloud. For once Fortar misjudged his master's moods—he flamed crimson. But Sammeth was laughing ironically, without the slightest trace of mirth.

He studied the incredibly expanding Earth. Even for this last desperate plan, he had to win the race to the atmosphere. The attackers were closing the gap to the stern of his ship. The heavens were quickly losing their intense blackness as he approached the tenuous outer reaches of the atmosphere.

"I've got to beat them!" he breathed tensely. "I've got to! And I will. . . ."

For the Mercurians would have to brake before entering the atmosphere. He tore his gaze from the ships directly behind him, stared at the vision screen. Earth was enormously vast, and growing more cosmically with each beat of his frenzied heart.

Directly in his path lay the yellow sands of the Sahara Desert. He could even see the dark splotch of the arsenal in the center.

The Mercurians were beginning to check their furious drive. But he released more stern jets. Still the attackers were close behind, and he wasn't gaining much distance. He fired every stern tube at the smallest

possible interval. The ship shuddered as it responded to the terrific impetus.

"God!" he whispered despairingly. "They've done it! They've done what I prayed they wouldn't do. . . ."

The Mercurians had sent out a small detachment of suicide ships—ships that also would not brake to enter the atmosphere. He felt his pounding heart slow with dull hopelessness. They could easily overtake him, and stop him even without weapons. They could dash into him from each side, force him into a power dive at a tangent that would take him far off his course.

Feeling his discouragement, Fortar faded in color on his shoulder. Sammeth felt like putting his head and arms on the controls and weeping hysterically.

"I can't face it," he moaned brokenly. "To be so near success—and then to fail!"

Earth filled the whole sky in front of him and far to every side. The darkness of space yielded to the deepening azure of Earth's heaven. He remembered that blue all too well. That, and the green of vegetation, had always had the power of misting his eyes during his long exile.

He brushed the bitter tears from his eyes, glanced back at the pursuing Mercurians. They were less than half a mile away. He'd never make it. . . .

HE waited for the Mercurians to smash at him from each side. But nothing happened. He heard the walls of the ship begin to sing a high, plaintive, wailing monotone, felt the air growing hot inside the cabin. He was within Earth's atmosphere.

"They couldn't stand it, Fortar!" he cackled, leering at the Mercurian ships, which had fallen back. "The heat was too much for them. Hub—suicide ships that can't face molten death!"

His lips were twisted in grim contempt as he blasted two braking jets. It wouldn't be enough for safety, of course, but it would be just enough not to fail.

"They're catching up now, Fortar.

But they won't overtake us. We've got them, and they know it. They know they can't do anything to stop us. We're going to do something that scares me stiff, but it's going to save the world from conquest. Fortar, I'll be remembered as one of mankind's saviors, and you'll be the finest little apret in history!"

Fortar glowed pink with pleasure. Sammeth patted the Venusian's tiny head.

"Just be thankful that the Rulers paid a bit of attention to me once. If the Mercurians had any weapons, we'd have been blasted out of space long ago. That would've finished my plan right there. But they don't have any, so we still can win. We will!"

It was almost time. Earth had flattened out to a tremendous two-dimensional disk. He knew the frightful whistling roar of his approach could be heard at each distant horizon, for he saw stratosphere transport ships lumber alarmedly out of his path.

Directly below, the buildings of the arsenal began to assume form. He recognized the guard towers, the hangars of the inadequate pursuit ships, the barracks of the small garrison, the main buildings of the arsenal itself.

Sammeth locked the controls and picked up the Venusian who had been his companion for so many years. They looked back at the suicide squad that had been detailed to stop them. The old man smiled victoriously and the apret grew even more pink.

The disguises had been stripped from the Mercurian ships by the heat of friction with the air. They were trying to pinch him off from each side and drive him away from the arsenal. But his speed had been too great for their caution. Now, faced by defeat, they cast aside caution and dived more swiftly for him.

"Well, Fortar," he grinned in triumph, "here's the end of exile."

Decisively he pushed the bar that released the stern rockets. The nearest Mercurian was swamped by the burst of flame. He saw it explode furiously.

"Look at that, Fortar!" he shouted. "Earth still has a few armed trans-

ports left behind by the fleet for guard duty."

The lumbering ships of Earth had dropped viciously toward the invading fleet, were stabbing death rays at the Mercurian ships. The attackers burst into flame and dropped helplessly toward Earth.

That was the last he saw. His own ship was a fiery meteorite when it smashed through the roof of the largest storage building in the arsenal. It buried itself so deeply in the sand beneath that it remained imbedded despite the appalling explosion that shook the entire planet.

CRAYELL TARANETH, Commander-in-chief of the Earth fleet that had hastily been recalled from maneuvers, stood beside Hinay Lewneth, Chief Ruler of Earth. They watched while two charred bodies were removed from the small space ship that had been proved to be the cause of the terrific explosion.

"Yes, it's Andar Sammeth," said Taraneth, after examining the almost unrecognizable features. "I'd recognize that Venusian playmate of his even if I couldn't recognize Sammeth's face."

"I can hardly believe it," the Chief Ruler said thoughtfully. "Sammeth was leading Taumis' attack. It's difficult to believe that a man would actually try to justify his analysis of the Mercurians by inciting them to invasion. I never thought he would stoop to betraying his own planet to prove his mistaken theory."

Taraneth made an impatient gesture.

"The whole attack was too clever for a Mercurian," he stated firmly. "Only an Earthman could have planned it in such detail. We can, at least, be thankful that he failed to reach the arsenal. If the Mercurians had been able to steal our weapons, I don't even dare to think of what they might have done to the Solar System."

"Especially with a shrewd renegade Earthman to lead them," Lewneth added with disgust. "Thank the Lord he had an old ship. Those outdated models are unreliable when they enter an atmosphere. Imagine what might have happened if he had had a ship he could have managed!"

Taraneth spat near the corpse.

"Andar Sammeth will be remembered as the vilest traitor to his race," he declared grimly.

●
NEXT ISSUE

CITADEL OF SCIENCE

A Novelet of Exiles on Mars

By **ARTHUR J. BURKS**

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new Power came into my life. After 43 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure, this strange Power brought to me a sense of overwhelming victory, and I have been overcoming every undesirable condition of my life ever since. What a change it was. Now—I have credit at more than one bank, I own a beautiful home, own a newspaper and a large office building, and my wife and family are amply provided for after I leave for shores unknown. In addition to these material benefits, I have a sweet peace in my life. I am happy as happy can be. No circumstance ever upsets me, for I have learned how to draw upon the invisible God-Law, under any and all circumstances.

You too may find and use the same staggering Power of the God-Law that I use. It can bring to you too, whatever things are right and proper for you to have. Do you believe this? It won't cost much to find out—just a penny post-card or a letter, addressed to Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 135, Moscow, Idaho, will bring you the story of the most fascinating success of the century. And the same Power I use is here for your use too. I'll be glad to tell you about it. All information about this experience will be sent you free, of course. The address again—Dr. Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 135, Moscow, Idaho. Advt. Copyright 1939 Frank B. Robinson.



Science Questions and Answers



PRIMITIVE CLOCKS

How did prehistoric man measure time, when there weren't any clocks?—E. H., New Castle, Penna.

Prehistoric man told time during the day by means of the sun-dial. However, for telling time during the dark hours of the night, he manufactured a crude clock. This he did by securing long blades of grass, braiding them together into a long rope. This rope, if ignited, would smoulder, not burn rapidly.

After experimenting with these smouldering ropes, he made one just long enough to burn through the night. In this length of rope he then tied knots which would correspond to the divisions which he had placed on the sun-dial. It took as long for each knotted length of rope to burn as it did for the sun to pass between two divisions of the dial.—Ed.

INSECT DATA

What are some of the distinctive characteristics of insects, aside from the fact that they are all invertebrates?—U. S. M., San Francisco, Calif.

The blood of insects is either green or yellow. It doesn't flow through veins, but simply passes back and forth across the insect's internal organs. Insects do not have noses nor lungs, but breathe through tiny holes, called spiracles, along the sides of their abdomen.

There are about 640,000 kinds of insects, and there may be millions of individuals of each species.—Ed.

GRAPHOLOGY

Can graphologists analyze the handwriting of different individuals and announce whether the persons are honest or dishonest?—B. L., Baltimore, Maryland.

Dr. Robert Saudek, in his fascinating book, "Experiments With Handwriting," has some very interesting observations to discuss in reference to your inquiry. He examined hundreds of writings of criminals. The appearance of one certain sign in a person's handwriting presumed to be associated with criminal tendencies may be a coincidence, or may be entirely innocent. So Dr. Saudek searches for several tell-tale signs in the handwritings of subjects.

Before he can assert that an individual is dishonest, Dr. Saudek must have several indications from the handwriting. In his most interesting experiment he collected 74 handwritings from the employees of English firms and found 14 cases which he diagnosed as dishonest. Eventually, it was proved that every one of the 14 had actually engaged in dishonest practices. The guilty writing is slower, flabby, uncertain, variable, and shows touching up.—Ed.

ROCKETS FOR THE WORLD

We read a great deal about the fact that rocket travel is soon due. Actually, how close is rocket science to practical exploration of the stratosphere at an altitude of, say, fifty miles?—I. B., N. Y. C., N. Y.

Studies at the California Institute of Technology lead investigators to believe that with the exhaust velocity of 7,000 feet a second obtained by R. H. Goddard's rockets, powder rockets could now be built capable of rising 100,000 feet. In fact, under some conditions, they believe a gas-propelled, eighty-five

pound rocket, exhausting its burned fuel through a nozzle at the rate of 12,000 feet a second, could rise under power to an altitude of fifty miles, and then continue, "coasting," straight up for another 175 miles.

As a matter of fact, north of Roswell, N. M., rockets hobble skyward from a sixty-foot tower, and then straighten out into a true vertical path, soaring up two miles into the air at a speed of more than 700 miles an hour! At the top of their flight, they hang in air a split second, then tumble over and float gently down to earth as their parachutes automatically belly out.—Ed.

WHY A COMET SHINES

What makes a comet luminescent? And why does the tail always point away from the Sun?—G. T., L. I., N. Y.

A great deal of the visibility of comets is the result of reflected sunlight, but no doubt there is some luminescence in the comet itself. The coma seems to expand when the comet nears the Sun. The heating effect of the Sun causes the gas imprisoned in the solids to escape.

This gas carries with it fine dust and the combination shines by the light of the Sun. But when the gas becomes sufficiently heated a glow develops within. Meanwhile the comet continues its rush toward the Sun under the gravitational pull of that massive body. But the Sun exerts a pressure as well as a pulling effect.

Kepler suggested more than 300 years ago that a comet's tail was caused by the pressure of sunlight on the fine particles in the head, but it was only about 40 years ago that Nichols and Hull demonstrated this in the laboratory. A minute particle of this cometary dust then is in rather an unstable condition. The gravity of the Sun says "Come," but the radiation pressure says, "Go." And go it does when a close enough approach is made.

This receding material, then, makes the tail. It flows out away from the Sun, not behind the comet, but always in the general direction away from the Sun. The comet's own velocity affects this exact direction. Therefore when the comet is on its return journey the tail precedes the head.—Ed.

THE FIREFLY'S FLASH

Recently, you published an account in SCIENTIFACTS telling about the cold light produced by the firefly. How exactly is the flash of the firefly produced? And does the insect exhibit the light in any regular pattern?—V. S., Philadelphia, Pa.

The firefly is a skywriter who always writes the same letter, a shallow, lopsided U, when he flashes!

This uniform pattern was discovered by Professor Charles T. Knipp of the University of Illinois.

Just before a fly flashes he slows his flight. As the flash begins he drops toward the ground. Then his speed increases and he finishes the flash on a rise, and the rise takes him higher than when he lighted up.

The reason for the peculiar motion, Professor Knipp suggests, is the extra energy used to flash. The fly's power drops momentarily when he turns on the light, then flows more strongly during the glow.

The flash is made by oxygen combining with two chemicals in the cells of the luminous part of the body. The two are luciferin and luciferase. The first carries the oxygen to the second, and then the flash occurs.—Ed.

VIA INTELLIGENCE

By GORDON A. GILES

Author of "Via Death," "Via Venus," etc.



Stranded, the Expedition Must Buy Its Way Off the Furnace Planet, at the Price of Death if They Win—and Death if They Lose!

HELLO, Earth, Mars and Venus! Mercury Expedition Number One resuming contact after three months, two-hundred-forty-second day of our stay. Gillway at the keys.

All ten of us are still alive and well! We are rather proud of this. We have now been on Mercury twice the length of time we originally intended—longer than our air, water and food supplies were estimated to last. How we have done it is a long story.

But we don't care to stay any longer. We're determined to make a crossing at this conjunction of Mercury and Earth. The question is, how? Our rear rocket system is still useless for sustained space flight. We only have eighteen days to solve our problem.

We know there is a way, if only Omega would tell us. Omega is one of the vegetable intelligences. To ex-

"Shoot," Omega said. "I can turn the bullet aside"

A "Mercury Expedition Number One" Story

plain about him, I'll have to recapitulate.

Three months ago, after draining the mercury metal lake and finding our reserve fuel, we took off. Trouble developed immediately. Mercury vapors had amalgamated with our exposed rocket tubes, weakening them. Rocket tubes have to be supremely sturdy, as everyone knows. They are made of platinum-iridium alloy. They have to withstand high fuel temperatures, and the cold of space. The slightest weakening makes them useless. The mercury vapors of the lake had made a soft amalgam of ours.

When a rear bank of jets blew out, Captain Atwell ordered a landing on Mercury's little moon, for investigation.

Phaeton, as Markers had named it, is small, only ten miles in diameter. It's a solid mass of alloyed metals, completely airless, waterless, lifeless. It rotates on its own axis at the furious rate of once an hour. Each hour the heavens wheeled about us as though geared to a whirling wheel.

It actually made us dizzy. We had the feeling that we would slide off and catapult away, hurled by centrifugal force like a stone from a sling. It was a unique sensation. Von Zell, for instance, threw himself flat when he stepped from the ship, and grabbed a rock as if to hold on. In the almost negligible gravitation of the little satellite, the big boulder came up in his arms like a hydrogen-filled balloon. It was no more of an anchor than a feather.

WE all had to laugh, despite our dilemma. While Tarnay and Karsen were going over the rockets, the rest of us amused ourselves. We pitched metal lumps and watched them travel through space, never to come back. The escape-velocity was unbelievably low, something like thirty feet a second, easily achieved by our arm-muscles in throwing.

In a way, it gave us a thrill to realize we could throw objects into the Sun, though they wouldn't arrive for years. We threw some down toward Mercury, thereby starting man-made meteorites that would pepper the planet.

Robertson exuberantly tested his jumping powers. He flew up, in his seal-suit, like a cannon shot. He gave us a fright, for he went up and up, from the initial impetus, dwindling till he was lost among the stars! Then he reappeared, floating down like a dust mote. He landed and clutched at us, pale and gasping.

"Lord!" he blurted. "I thought for a minute I had jumped clear off the place."

A man might easily do it, too, with a running leap.

But most of all, we just stood and looked up, watching the firmament wheel majestically about us. A half-hour of daylight, a half-hour of night—over and over. The Sun plunged from horizon to horizon like a great comet. The stars streaked around so fast that, to our unaccustomed eyes, they left a faint trail. It was like a film run at super-speed, an unforgettable sensation. We're not sorry we saw it.

It's strange to think of our delight in these phenomena, when all the while our chances of getting back to Earth hung in the unknown. But it's good that men can laugh and look curiously at the bared teeth of adversity. I speak for the entire human race, not just us.

Tarnay and Karsen, after their careful examination, gave their report. We could not go on. The rocket tubes wouldn't stand up for sustained acceleration, nor could we stay on the planetoid.

"Back to Mercury, men," Captain Atwell announced. "We're faced with three months additional stay. Somehow, we must last it out."

TWO Hundred Forty-Third Day.

Five hours later, we maneuvered down over the Twilight Zone. Our ship threw up a spray of mercury metal as it landed on the lake that had drained into the valley. While we floated there, Captain Atwell ordered a complete inventory of supplies.

"Reserves above the minimum amount needed for the space flight are low," Ling announced. "Food, enough for three weeks. Water, about ten days. Oxygen, a week."

We stared at each other, dismayed. A week's supply of breath for our lungs, little more of food and water, and our rocket engine nearly useless! The inhospitable terrain of Mercury seemed to mock us. Von Zell laughed a little hysterically.

"We're not losing a life, men. We're all staying together. All ten of us—here!"

Captain Atwell slapped Von Zell's face stingingly, before he could say more. But the slap was really delivered to all of us. Von Zell just happened to express himself.

"Get hold of yourselves," Captain Atwell snapped. "It's not as bad as it seems. There's liquid air on the Night Side, which we can tank. There's pure ice frozen out there, too. We'll go for air first, then water. One thing at a time. As for food and the rocket engine, we'll see."

"Sorry, Captain," Von Zell murmured for all of us.

Morale is a strange thing, for you either have it or you don't. We had it from then on—or rather, we had Captain Atwell. His name will go down in history as a world-conquerer, alongside those of Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon, and with far more meaning. I'm saying this unofficially. If Atwell saw it, he'd probably put Ling in my place as radio operator.

Now to switch to Omega. Not long after we landed on the mercury lake, Swinerton suddenly let out a whoop. The next moment, in his air-helmet, he dashed from the lock and made his way across the mercury. Like a clumsy skater on ice, or like a man in a nightmare, he ran for all he was worth, yet he barely moved.

He struggled a hundred feet, picked up something, and returned. Panting, he showed it to us. It was one of the brain-plants, or vegetable-minds, the first we had seen. A pulpy white mass, it was convoluted like a naked brain, set in a chalice of thick greenish leaves. Its stem and root had been torn away. Swinerton's sharp eyes had seen it bobbing on the mercury surface.

How had it survived the deluge of crushing, roaring liquid metal that had poured through its underground cavern? Swinerton tried to find out, ask-

ing it questions aloud. He claimed he had conversed with them mentally that way. They had absorbed the thoughts accompanying his voice, and returned telepathic answers that registered as a voice to Swinerton.

That was his story, anyway. But now no slightest sign came from this plant-brain, no slightest mental whisper, though we all held our breaths in anticipation.

"It's dead," Swinerton said mournfully. "Omega, the ultimate in intelligent life!"

The rest of us smiled. Somehow, on second thought, it seemed ridiculous to expect a plant to be a rational being. It looked more like cauliflower, on close examination. Swinerton had imagined his underground episode of talking to them, we thought.

"Dead or alive," scoffed Markers, "you never talked with them telepathically."

Swinerton was about to make an angry retort, but Captain Atwell interposed.

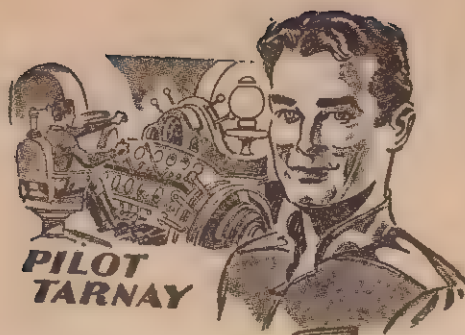
"Expedition to locate liquid air will start in an hour. Parletti, Tarnay, Robertson, von Zell and myself. Get ready, men."

To switch to the present, thanks for the musical broadcast, Earth. We've about worn out the few phonograph records we have here. And thanks, World President Mason, for your speech in behalf of the planet, saying you're overjoyed that we've survived. We can hardly believe that Earth, from pole to pole, went wild when we resumed contact yesterday, and that for a whole night, every radio, newspaper, and telecast celebrated the event. We're so deeply moved that we can't even talk about it.

TWO Hundred Forty-Fourth Day. It doesn't take long to tell how we replenished our stores of air and water, though it amounted to weeks of labor and planning.

Captain Atwell's expedition to the Night Side, in heated seal-suits, found a pool of liquid air within three days. It was fed by some underground spring, from the bitter wastelands beyond, where Absolute Zero reigned.

Agas ago, Parletti explained, when



Mercury finally ceased rotating, most of its atmosphere froze on the Night Side. At the edges of this hemisphere, where it touches the warmer Twilight Zone, the gases liquefy and flow.

I call the pool we used "liquid air," but it's not Earth air. That would be too much to expect. Actually it was only seventeen per cent oxygen. The rest was mainly nitrogen, but with a high five per cent content of inert gases—neon, argon and krypton. But it had life-giving oxygen, and that was the main thing.

By teamwork, we filled all our empty tanks in two weeks. Parletti and Robertson drained the liquid from the pool into an open round-bottomed vat, made of sheet metal. This they dragged five miles into the Twilight Zone, where Tarnay and Ling were stationed with their tanking apparatus.

It was simply a pipe that sucked up the liquid, let it evaporate en route, and pumped the gas into the tanks under pressure. The pump was our gyroscope motor system, temporarily removed from the ship. Power came from my radio batteries, charged constantly by seleno-cells under the Sun's constant rays.

Markers and myself carried the tanks back and forth, from the ship to the spot. The strategic spot was chosen because it was out of the Sun's direct glare, in the latitude where its rim was just below the horizon. Any farther "south" and the liquid air would have boiled away too fast.

And so our ship was soon aerated by the new mixture. By increasing the pressure, we offset the low oxygen value. The bends and other symptoms were avoided by increasing the pres-

sure gradually, over a period of twenty-four hours. Now we have lived three months with this high-pressure, low-oxygen air, without ill effects. The human mechanism is an adaptable one. However, over a period of years, the mixture would probably be harmful.

Water was a simple problem. Large ice blocks are frozen eternally on the Night Side, where the Sun hasn't shone for incredible ages. Water in its crystal form is always pure, free from saline impurities. We merely carted the ice-blocks to our ship and let them melt into our tanks.

But food was a harder nut to crack. That was where Omega helped us.

Hello, Venus Expedition Two! Glad to get your greetings. You say you'd give your right arms for a glimpse of the Sun or stars through Venus' solid cloud-packs? You wouldn't want our Sun, even the half we have above the horizon in our Twilight Zone. It's blazingly hot. We're all burned black.

TWO Hundred Forty-Fifth Day.

While the others had been storing fresh air and water supplies, Captain Atwell, von Zell and Swinerton had been struggling with the food problem.

First they made a hundred-mile trek along the Twilight Zone, finding another sunken valley with its indigenous life. There must be a string of such valleys around Mercury, harboring the remnants of its fauna and flora that probably flourished before rotation ceased.

Shooting down several samples of the winged animals that prey on one another, they brought these back for examination. Von Zell's chemical tests showed their flesh to be impregnated with metallo-organic compounds.

Venus, Earth and Mars have evolved life-forms that are mutually edible. But Mercury, loaded with heavier metals, has evolved a unique branch of life. Copper, zinc, lead—even platinum—run through all Mercurian protoplasm. It is the in-between stage of strictly carbon life on Earth, and silicic life, which Mercury also has.

Swinerton shook his head and shrugged unhappily. The flesh of Mercurian animals would be deadly poison to us.

Desperately, with our stored food running low, he boiled the stuff for hours, hoping to precipitate the metals. Von Zell found enough left for the meat to be left still poison. Acids were tried, and alkalis, but the metals stubbornly refused to precipitate. In organic chain-compounds, metals tend to stay firmly.

A month later, we were forced to break into our food reserves. What would we eat in space, if and when we took off? Air and water we had, but no food.

We all became moody, Swinerton particularly. He would sometimes stand before Omega and stare for hours. Omega wasn't dead, by the way. Swinerton had set the broken stem in a water solution of sugar and phosphate. The brain-plant grew rootlets and seemed to take on new freshness.

"Omega," Swinerton would often mutter, "listen to me! Talk to me! How did you escape the mercury flood?"

Von Zell and Swinerton tried one last desperate resort. They fried the Mercurian flesh in hot lard, but of course the metals did not precipitate.

"Still poison!" von Zell groaned. "All right, I admit there's no way of making that flesh edible."

"Have you tried to precipitate the metals electrically?" someone asked.

Von Zell froze erect, stunned.

"That's it!" he almost screamed.

"The metals will take the ion form readily, and then can be thrown out of solution. Tarnay, you have saved us!"

"Don't give me credit," Tarnay denied. "Karsen said it."

"No, I didn't," Karsen said. "You did, didn't you, Parletti?"

Suddenly we were all looking at one another bewilderedly. Who had said that?

"Omega was the one," Swinerton announced quietly. "That is, he said it by telepathy."

WE looked around at us triumphant-ly, for we had practically called him crazy. We had all heard it, though not those exact words. I've freely translated. It was more of a subtle impression that stole into our minds, like a sound just at the edge of hearing.

Tarnay claimed he heard the words "stupid fools" first.

At any rate, it was the solution. Under von Zell's eager orders, I rigged all my batteries together. He immersed a sample of Mercurian flesh in salt solution, as an electrolyte, and ran current through the set-up.

An hour later, a smudge of metals had precipitated at the bottom of the jar. The remaining tissue von Zell found to be free of heavy metals! He tried it and ate it, serving as our guinea-pig. Someone had to do it, and he insisted on himself, confident of his purifying process.

"Tastes like good steak," he informed.

Three hours later he felt no ill effects and we all breathed again. So our food problem was solved. A daily hunting party brought back game. My selenocells were set up permanently, beside the precipitation vat, to feed current and purify the Mercurian flesh of heavy, poisonous metals.

But von Zell lied, in his enthusiasm. It is remarkably tough, unappetizing, rather blubbery flesh, yet we're grateful for it. It satisfies our stomachs, if not our palates. We've varied our diet with Mercurian grasses and roots, also electrically treated.

TWO Hundred Forty-sixth Day.

We are assured of continued existence, with air, water and food at hand—the three main essentials of life. Our first meal of purified Mercurian meat was a joyous occasion. We toasted Omega with glasses of water.

No one wanted to spoil the fun and mention the rocket tubes. That hanging sword still remained, however. It loomed like a mountain before us, though we had conquered the foothills of air, water and food.

But to get back to Omega—

Swinerton naturally was excited that his charge had finally broken its long silence. He was also angry with it.

"Omega," he demanded, "why have you kept silent so long?"

"I was thinking," came back in what I'll describe as a phlegmatic "tone."

The conversation I report will be the consensus among all of us. We all "heard" slightly different versions of

Omega's startling telepathic speech.

"Of what?" Swinerton pursued.

"You would not understand."

"Weren't you aware of our food predicament all the time? Why didn't you give your suggestion before?"

"What did it matter whether you solved the problem or not?" Omega asked tranquilly. "I spoke only because of your sheer stupidity in not seeing the answer."

Omega was blunt, if nothing else. Swinerton colored for all of us, and changed the subject.

"How did you escape the mercury flood?" he queried.

"By willing around myself a shield of force. I was barely in time, for the flood tore my roots away. Surrounded by the protective shield, I bobbed to the surface."

Swinerton asked about the shield of force, but the answer was incomprehensible. Tarnay murmured something about "a controlled vibratory shell" and then gave up.

"We had to release that mercury flood to save ourselves," Swinerton said, by way of apology. "Or we thought we did. We're sorry it uprooted you."

"It matters not," Omega returned indifferently.

"Were the others saved, too?"

"No."

"Why didn't they surround themselves with force-shields?"

"They did not wish to."

"You mean," Swinerton gasped, "that they made no move to avoid death, when they easily could have?"

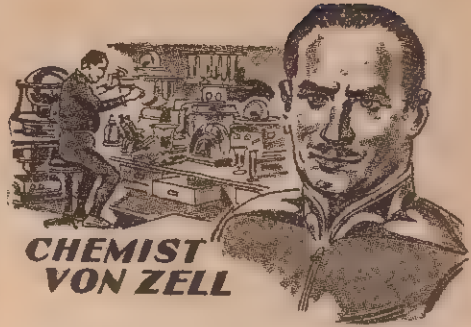
"Avoid death? Why? We would all long ago have committed suicide, except that doing so involves an effort which we did not choose to make."

WE stared blankly at one another. Trying to understand that dangerous, maddening philosophy, our minds rocked.

"But wouldn't you rather be alive than dead?" Swinerton insisted, sweating.

"What is the difference?"

We didn't know whether to take that reply as idiom, or literally. Somehow, Omega seemed to be laughing at us quite mirthlessly.



"But you saved yourself," Swinerton declared. "You must have had a reason, a desire to live."

"No, I had no reason, nor was it instinct to save myself. I did it because I did it."

"But *why*?" roared Swinerton.

"There is no 'why' for anything. There is no reason for anything. A million years ago, our race stopped asking that futile question."

Swinerton shook his head dazedly and got back to firmer ground.

"How long have you existed?"

"A million of what you call years."

"I mean you personally, as an entity. Not your race."

"I mean myself, personally. I was in that cavern alone ten thousand years."

"Impossible," Swinerton mumbled uncertainly. "How do you feed? Why, there's not enough nutriment in acres and acres of ground to have supported you that long."

"I am not a plant, so I do not feed from chemicals. I extract pure energy from matter. A cubic foot of any sort of matter will last me a thousand years. The chemicals you put in this water are unnecessary. The water alone is all I need. Or, lacking that, air, vapor, or just cosmic rays will do as well."

"You're eternal!" Swinerton said, awed.

"If I choose."

"Do you reproduce?"

"No."

"Then your race is dying out, if you never avoid accidental death?"

"It is," Omega stated unemotionally.

"How many of you are left? Do you know?"

"Yes. I'm in telepathic rapport with all my fellows. One hundred and

twenty-nine are left." A pause. "No—one hundred and twenty-eight," he amended. "A thousand miles from here, in a cave, one was just crushed by a falling rock. He did not choose to live."

Swinerton asked more questions, but Omega fell silent. He didn't speak again till three days later. Omega was like that, in the following time, speaking for a few minutes, then shutting his mind to us as if we didn't exist.

That probably seems like a collective hallucination to you. Perhaps it is. We have no proof. Von Zell might have thought of the electrical precipitation himself.

Hello, Mars Expedition Two! Your winter has set in, you say, confining you to your barracks. It's a long, bitter one. It'll last six months. Luckily, besides cards and chess, you have books. We didn't. If you get tired of those, try the roundelay story game, each person continuing the adventures of a mythical hero. Give him a super space ship and all the Universe to roam in. It's great fun.

TWO Hundred Forty-seventh Day. The necessities of life were taken care of, so we concentrated on the rocket tube problem.

Of our sixty-four drive rockets, nine had blown out in the previous take-off. We had twelve replacements. It had not been thought, on Earth, that more would ever be needed. The margin of three replacements left is not enough, Tarnay says. At least ten to twenty others would blow out if we took off again.

The action of the mercury vapors had greatly softened the tubes. Mercury tends to amalgamate with any and all metals, and the result is an alloy that can readily be manipulated. But the first blasts of rocket flame had burned out this amalgam, leaving the surface badly pitted. Our only hope was to recoat the weakened tubes with harder metal again, and only platinum-iridium alloy would do.

We have the metal. Parletti discovered nuggets of almost chemically pure platinum and iridium. They lie around on unweathered Mercury like so many acorns. It was much harder to find the clay we needed.

We can melt them, even though they are two of the most refractory metals known, with melting points of eighteen hundred, and twenty-three hundred degrees Centigrade. Tarnay, Markers and I devised an electric-arc unit for the purpose.

But we can't melt enough of it at once. Our unit melts a few grams at a time, at the point of arc. We somehow have to melt and keep molten several pounds in our clay vessel. The rocket tubes must be dipped in one after another, for their full length, to become coated all over with new platinum-iridium alloy. To make an electric-arc furnace that size and capacity would take ten times the equipment we have. We came to that inexorable conclusion six weeks ago.

Another set-back dispirited us. Karsen fell ill for three days and Parletti has diagnosed it as arsenic poisoning! It is impossible for the electrical method to eliminate all metals in our Mercurian food. Traces of arsenic remain, but even worse than that is the minute amount of lead. Lead is a cumulative poison. It stores up in the body until it causes death.

Parletti estimated that two or three months of the Mercurian food would bring us all down with lead and arsenic poisoning. And eventually bad enough to kill us. Karsen was nursed back to health with our precious Earth food.

The hunting parties are often caught in the short but terrible storms that rage between the Night Side and Day Side temperatures, precipitating metal hail. Once Robertson and Ling came in battered and bleeding, and were laid up for three days.

It was as though Mercury had gathered all its sullen wrath and was warning the alien invaders to be gone. Somehow, we have to leave at the next conjunction. It is two weeks off, and we still haven't repaired our rockets.

Hello, Venus! Keep your chin up. The food-mold destroyed half our food supplies, too. But you'll find the Venusian animals good eating. Wish we could say the same for Mercury. . . .

TWO Hundred Forty-eighth day. Swinerton carried on several more "conversations" with Omega—

when Omega was disposed to converse. We blessed Omega at times for keeping our minds off our troubles. We also cursed him, for his insidious philosophy was more dangerous to our morale than anything we had to battle.

Omega and his kind have no ambitions, no desires, no instinct of work or self-preservation. They are probably the end-product of all intelligence. They could be super-scientists and rule the Solar System, except that long ago they simply let their manipulative limbs become vestigial and lost all inner drive. They are simply minds, dreaming on and on, existing for no reason except that not existing requires a suicidal effort.

What do their thoughts consist of? How have they filled that appalling stretch of time since they became vegetables? Imagine a million years of physical inactivity! How had they kept from going mad, or being bored to death?

They were being bored to death! That was the answer. Yet why did they make no attempt to escape? Why weren't they in the least interested in establishing contact with us, or the Martians before us?

"Look," Swinerton put it. "A worm says to us, 'Hello, man! Why do you live out there, in that emptiness? Why don't you come down where we are? There is nice, black, lightless ground to wallow in, and eat, and dig through. This is the life! What are you doing out there where everything is blinding and empty and nothing happens?' The worm, you see, knows nothing of the Sun and stars and all the greater things. We're the worms telling Omega he should come down from his higher mental realm and wallow in the mud with us."

Sensitive by nature, Swinerton brooded over those sinister ideas. That other time, spending a week down in the cavern with the plant-minds, he had come back with the outlook of a plant mind.

Captain Atwell one day threatened to throw Omega out, for we were all worried about Swinerton.

"We're not concerned about the thinking processes of this mental weed," Captain Atwell declared sternly.

"We have to get our rocket tubes repaired and leave."

Swinerton started. "Good Lord!" he whispered. "Why didn't I think of it before? Omega's our answer. He knows everything. He even utilizes atomic energy. Omega can tell us how to repair our rockets!"

We thought Swinerton was growing mad. But the next time Omega deigned to answer, he tried questioning the vegetable intelligence.

"Omega, tell us how to repair our rockets," Swinerton demanded. Briefly he explained the ship's engine and its system of rocket propulsion.

"Why do you want to repair your ship?" Omega asked.

"To leave, of course," Swinerton snapped.

"Why?"

MOCKINGLY Omega was turning our own guns on us. It was the first time he had asked for a cause.

"So we can get back to Earth, our home planet, and report," Swinerton said doggedly.

"What good is that?"

"Space travel will be able to go on."

"And after space travel, what?"

"The human race expands, advances."

"To what?"

Swinerton looked at us helplessly. Did the stock answers mean anything to Omega?

"To an interplanetary empire," Swinerton groaned.

"For what purpose?"

"Damn you! Are you toying with us?"

"No. Just showing how futile it all is. Look what happened to the Martians."

"What!" Robertson yelled the word out, face alight. "What *did* happen to the Martians?"

We all leaned forward tensely. Would Omega reveal the stupendous mystery of the past that had tantalized us on three expeditions to three planets? But Omega obstinately became silent. It was not till five days later that he spoke again, in answer to Swinerton's hourly calls.

"The rocket tubes," Swinerton said. "You could tell us how to repair them,

couldn't you? Don't you know how?"

"Yes. But I do not choose to. I see no reason to trouble myself."

"Must you have a reason? You said once there's no reason to anything."

"Exactly," Omega returned heartlessly.

"You can't refuse—it means our lives," Captain Atwell rasped threateningly. He pulled out his pistol, aiming it for Omega's head. "If you don't tell us, I'll blow you to atoms!"

It was a futile gesture.

"Shoot," Omega said. "If I wish, I can turn the bullet aside with the shield of force, or I can take death. It depends on what I would wish at the moment you fired."

Either way, we would get no answer. What could we do? Omega had no answer for the worms.

My chronicle is now up to date. I mentioned earlier that we know Omega could save us, but he hasn't. Perhaps we are all mad. We don't know. We're haggard, haunted, though not so much by the thought of doom. If a man could talk to a worm, he might undermine its whole philosophy, too. It's strange to think that Mercury's greatest menace is something more intangible than poisoned food.

We should throw Omega out. He's poisoning our minds, and yet he's our last forlorn hope of leaving—if he chooses.

Just received your broadcast of the dedication ceremonies for the completed Tycho Space Station on the Moon. We know Omega would question the use of it. But we feel like cheering. There must be faith in progress, even if we're beginning to doubt its value.

TWO Hundred Forty-ninth day.

Startling news, Earth. Omega told us, after all! This morning he "awoke" again.

"Tell us how to repair our rockets," Swinerton pleaded. "In return, we'll try to give you anything you want."

What could a creature want who had lived a million years and known all things? But Omega threw a bombshell.

"Yes, I will bargain with you. I'll tell you how to make an atomic-energy furnace, to melt your alloy. In return,

I want a mind. We haven't examined a human mind since two million years ago, when we colonized Earth. You were sub-men then."

"A mind?" Swinerton asked in horror.

"Yes. Choose one among you. He will die, for I must absorb his mind completely."

Fantastic? Absurd? I'll describe the rest briefly, since it's even more unbelievable. Keeping his part of the bargain, Omega asked for our best technical man and hypnotized him. That was Tarney, of course.

Under Omega's control, Tarnay has become a super-scientist. I can't describe it in any other way. Like a robot, he assembled wires, batteries, prisms and seleno-cells, from our workshop supplies. He has been working furiously all day, putting his equipment together in some strange pattern. At his terse orders, the rest of us have helped where we could, winding coils, hooking up battery circuits and lathing metal parts.

Will resume tomorrow. We are tired, dazed, wondering if the machine we're putting together will mean anything. We hope Omega isn't playing some monstrous joke on us.

Two Hundred Fiftieth day.

The machine is done. It works!

An hour ago, Tarnay set in the last part, a speck of radium from Ling's supplies. The clay pot from our electric-arc apparatus was put in the heart of Omega's machine. When Tarnay threw a switch, there was a deep hum that sounded like a billion angry atoms buzzing out of their orbits. We expected an explosion that would kill us all, including Omega, in a suicide plan spawned in his enigmatic mind.

But instead, the clay pot became red hot. The lumps of platinum and iridium within melted down in a few minutes. We dropped in more metal, filling the pot. All of it melted with ease.

Like happy pups we cheered and hopped around deliriously. It will be easy to dip our detached rocket tubes, coat them with alloy to make them strong again for space flight. We will start the dipping tomorrow.

The machine awes us. It releases

atomic energy, the dream of science for a century. Tarnay can't explain it, though his hands made it. Somehow, the radioactivity of the radium speck is increased tremendously, throwing off heat beside which the electric-arc is comparatively cold.

Omega has saved us. But we will have to pay the price. We promised.

"A life must be sacrificed; after all," Captain Atwell said bitterly. "I said I would bring you all back. I've failed. But at least I'll send you all back—"

We stopped him instantly. No voluntary sacrifice would be allowed. We drew lots. Ling is the unfortunate one.

TWO Hundred Fifty-fifth day.

Hello, Earth! I skipped five days because we were busy dipping the tubes and preparing for take-off. We're ready to leave now. All the tubes are shiny with the new surfacing of platinum-iridium alloy.

Ling is with us! All ten of us are coming back! You wonder, perhaps, if we tricked Omega, or simply refused to keep our bargain. Here's the story.

After the machine's completion, Omega went into one of his silent spells. We were all thinking the same thing—If we worked fast enough, and got away before Omega came out of it—well, what could he do? It would be his own fault.

We even went a step further. Why not just toss Omega out and forget about the whole thing? He was just a helpless plant. Why pay the price? What right had he to demand a life? Omega would probably just shrug it off anyway, and think us fools if we paid.

"I could blast you all where you stand," Omega's telepathic voice suddenly stated this morning. "You can't escape without paying the price. Whom have you chosen?"

Swinerton pushed Ling back.

"Me, Omega!" he shouted. "Take me quickly. I'll live in your mind. I can't stand this life any more. It's

meaningless, trivial, futile. Take me, Omega!"

We were paralyzed, waiting for something to happen.

"I choose—" Omega began.

We held our breaths, waiting for some ray, a force, an unknown beam to blast either Ling, or Swinerton, or all ten of us.

But Omega was silent. Slowly his chalice of leaves drooped. Before our eyes his pulpy brain crumbled into dust.

"He chose suicide!" gasped Swinerton. "But why? Why?"

Yes, why? That question will ring through all eternity and never be answered, for anything. That is the philosophy of Omega.

We're ready for take-off. We're glad to leave Mercury and the shadow of Omega. Somewhere in space, Swinerton will get over it. But now he's sitting vacant-eyed, and doesn't answer us. We'll all have to reorientate our minds, before arriving on Earth. We'll have to forget Omega and his philosophy of indifference. Future expeditions to Mercury must be warned to keep away from the plant brains.

BY the way, don't get the idea that we're coming back with the secret of atomic energy. We had to tear down the machine, for we need the batteries and other parts. Tarnay says he could never begin to assemble it again, even with complete plans. He wouldn't understand what he was doing. That great secret still lies in the future of mankind, and we hope it doesn't end in the philosophy of Omega.

Captain Atwell has just given the take-off signal. We'll be on Earth in two months. All ten of us. That thought is already warming us, taking away the chill of Omega. If we keep talking to each other, we won't hear that echoing challenge—why, why?

Mercury Expedition Number One signing off.

THE SECRET OF THE PYRAMIDS

Coming Soon in a New "Via" Trilogy

By GORDON A. GILES

WATCH FOR IT!

Science Quiz

ARE you a perambulating five-foot shelf? Is there a filing-cabinet in your cranium? Here's a new collection of scientific brain-teasers and cosmic conundrums to test on your medulla oblongata. See if your cerebral cortex can answer these without referring to the current edition of the World Almanac or your encyclopedia. But if it's all Einstein to you, thumb your way to page 129 for the correct answers, as compiled by our Brain Trust.

POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE?

Are you hot or are you cold? Students, don your thinking caps and tell the old professor whether he's right or wrong on the following statements. (Par for this course —15 correct.)

1. Total eclipses of the sun are more numerous than those of the moon, but at a given place the chances of seeing a lunar eclipse are vastly greater.
2. The oceans are getting less and less salty.
3. At the North Magnetic Pole one would find Polaris overhead, in the zenith; at the equator it would be on the horizon.
4. Newton's discovery of the law of universal gravitation made it possible to determine the masses of the Earth, sun, and the planets.
5. A weight of ice-cold metal is as effective a cooling agent as an equal weight of ice.
6. The mass of the planet Mercury is easy to determine.
7. The air near sea level is condensed by the pressure of the air above it.
8. Deep breathing with no other exercise is useless.
9. Minerals in the soil are useful to plants only when they are dissolved.
10. Metals with few valence atoms easily lose them, thus becoming negatively charged ions.
11. Differences in the spectra of stars are supposedly due to differences in temperature.
12. Molecules of low molecular weight have high boiling points.
13. The wheel is a device for decreasing friction.
14. A good reflector is a good radiator.
15. Gases may be ionized with light as well as by ultraviolet radiation or X-rays.
16. A candle flame is visible because of the particles of hot carbon in it.
17. The human eye is a poor detector of radiant energy.
18. Pound for pound, lettuce contains more water than milk does.
19. It is most likely that the moon lost its original atmosphere by centrifugal action.
20. Water expands when freezing, instead of contracting as most substances do.

TAKE A LETTER

Here are ten incomplete scientific facts. Four suggestions are offered in each case as possible fill-ins for each statement, but there's only one correct answer. Can you pick the winners? It's as easy as A-B-C-D. (Par for this group—7 correct.)

1. Water is always flowing to lower levels until it reaches the sea. From there it is evaporated, transported by moving air currents until it condenses, precipitates as rain or snow, and eventually finds its way back into the sea. This is known as: (a) meteorology, (b) water cycle, (c) erosion, (d) humidity.
2. While heat depends upon the state, mass, and nature of the substance, temperature depends only upon the: (a) state, (b) mass, (c) nature, (d) none of these.
3. At an elevation of about three and one-half miles air pressure is reduced to about: (a) one-eighth, (b) one-fourth, (c) one-half, (d) one-tenth.
4. The first planet to be 'discovered' was: (a) Mars, (b) Uranus, (c) Jupiter, (d) Saturn.
5. The rate of increase in the spinning of the Earth necessary to cause objects to fly off the Earth is: (a) 3 times, (b) 7, (c) 10, (d) 17.
6. A given place experiences, on the average, two high tides every: (a) 12 hours, (b) 12 hours, 50.47 minutes, (c) 24 hours, (d) 24 hours, 50.47 minutes.

7. A quick test of starch is: (a) iodine, (b) taste buds (c) bunsen burner, (d) water.
8. When air moves north from the equator, the direction it will tend to move relative to the surface of the Earth is : (a) north, (b) south, (c) east, (d) west.
9. The Rocky Mountains are examples of mountains formed by: (a) volcanic action, (b) folding and faulting, (c) erosion of former plateaus, (d) isostasy.
10. The greatest and most frequent changes on Earth have been near the present: (a) mountains, (b) lakes, (c) coast lines, (d) North Magnetic Pole.

WHAT'S MY PLANET?

Something brand-new in science quizzes! A scientific mystery puzzle. We provide the clues—you solve the mystery. The following question is composed of three parts. Each part gives clues leading to the detection of a planet's identity. How soon can you guess the planet's identity from the hints given out? The faster you solve this, the more points you rate.

1. I am the first of the superior planets. My mean distance from the Sun is 141.5 million miles. My year is 686 days. My orbit around the Sun has, with the exception of the orbit of Mercury, a greater eccentricity than any other major planet. What's my planet? (Score 20—if your answer is accurate.)

2. My atmosphere has many properties similar to Earth's atmosphere. My diurnal rotation is 24 hours, 37 minutes. I have

more than one satellite.

Now do you know the name of my planet? (Score 10—if your answer is accurate.)

3. I shine with a red light and am a brilliant object in the heavens at midnight near opposition. I have two satellites. Astronomers have noted markings on my surface and have called these markings "canals." Now what planet am I? (Score 5—if your answer is correct.)

WHAT'S MY ELEMENT?

Did you like the above type of quiz? Then here we go again on the same sort of thing, but this time you have to guess the name of an element. Let's go!

1. I am probably the first element known to man. My atomic weight is 197.2. I am sometimes found in a crystallized form, usually as octahedra or tetrahedra, but more commonly in thin laminae or grains in sand or gravel. What's my element? (Score 20—if your guess is accurate.)

2. I am the most malleable of all metals and have been hammered into a leaf 0.0009 millimeter in thickness. I am very ductile and can be drawn into wire so fine that 166

meters weigh but a single gram. Now what's my element? (Score—10.)

3. My chemical symbol is Au. Ancient alchemists regarded me as the perfect metal. I have a bright yellow color when pure and have a high metallic luster. I am one of the world's most valuable metals, and am used as a medium of monetary exchange. Now can you guess the name of my element? (Score—5.)

DOUBLE OR NOTHING

Can you supply the missing word commonly associated with the other? Dashes represent the number of letters. You'll have to guess the correct mate for each word in order to score points. Otherwise, you lose. (Par—four points.)

1. Action and —————
2. Flora and —————
3. Wheel and —————

4. Dulong and —————
5. Phobos and —————
6. Cause and —————

IT'S THE LAW!

THE long arm of the scientific law reaches out into T.W.S.'s domain and helps us construct the following quiz. Below are eight famous laws, identified with the men who made them known. In the right-hand columns are key clues to the laws promulgated by the scientists. Your job is to match the law with the key phrase. Can do? (Par—four correct.)

Prevost's Law	Strain and stress
Boyle's Law	Expansion and gases
Dalton's Law	Radiating bodies
Hooke's Law	Induced current
Lenz's Law	Volume of air
Kirchoff's Law	Closed circuits
Charles' Law	Partial pressures
Ohm's Law	Intensity of Electric Force

Another Fascinating SCIENCE QUIZ Next Issue!

THE GOLDEN



Hyatt grabbed the gun by the barrel and smashed the stock down on the man's skull

By G. T. FLEMING-ROBERTS

Author of "The Scourge of Flame," "The Terrible People," etc.

Between the Hemispheres Rises a Wall of Doom, and Hyatt of International Police Tries to Break Earth's Solitary Confinement!

CHAPTER I

Ship of Doom

WHAT had happened could never have occurred. The records of the Eastern Seaboard Airways were there to prove it was impossible. Not since the year

2135, over a century past, had anything remotely like it happened. That horrible catastrophe had been due to a break in the beam which guided Eastern Seaboard's giant stratoships across the Atlantic.

There was nothing wrong with the beam now. It stretched its guiding

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BARRIER

A Complete
Novelet



finger unfailingly between the air harbors of Europe and America. And just as unfailingly, the ships of the stratosphere rode the beam—to sudden and inexplicable disaster.

Yet it could not have happened. Bill Hyatt, Chief Inspector, International Police, knew that it could not have hap-

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After twenty-four hours of such mass murder, the horror became known to the general public. That was when it became Bill Hyatt's job. For he was a policeman, and murder was still the gravest crime on the books.

The third west-bound ship reported overdue that night was the famous 456-D, pride of the line. When Bill Hyatt heard the despairing voice of the dispatcher at the air harbor report that the 456-D was thirty minutes late, he gave up all hope.

All that day there was frightful tension at the air harbor. Not a single stratoship had made port. Every one had been lost on a world that science had made too small, too old, and too wise to lose anything as large as a five-hundred-passenger stratoship.

The tension that belonged to the air harbor itself was reflected in the tired face of Bill Hyatt. He sat in his dome-like office on the top floor of the International Police Building. His gray eyes had watched the creeping hands of the radio impulse chronometer until his eyeballs ached. He had listened to the drone of the dispatcher's voice from the concealed radio reproducer until the voice became as hopeless and fatalistic as the music of a funeral dirge.

At three minutes after nine, the round aluminum door of Hyatt's office opened and Varna Roth came in. She was wearing shorts, a bolero, and a jaunty cape that hung from her straight shoulders to her slim curved hips. The material of her clothing was woven from spun plastic of a sea-green hue that was in startling contrast to her coppery red hair.

A SLOW smile softened the grimness of Hyatt's mouth and then faded when he saw that Varna had no smile to match his. Had the worry of the doomed stratoships come to plague her as it did Hyatt and the officials of Eastern Seaboard?

"You're worried, too?" he asked.

Varna walked to his desk, sat on it, and took his hand in hers.

"They've turned the stratoship disasters over to you, I suppose," she said quietly.

The smile returned to his face for a moment. The wisdom of this mere girl

frequently amazed him.

"How the devil did you guess?" he demanded.

"Oh, the progress of centuries hasn't changed the status of a policeman much," she said sweetly. "He's still the public servant. It's a fact that when no one knows what to do, everybody always says, 'Send for Bill Hyatt, hell-buster and trouble-shooter.'"

She leaned far forward over the panel of colored push buttons on his desk and pressed her lips to his forehead. Beneath her lips she must have felt the puzzled frown that suddenly creased it.

"Is the problem so bad, Bill?" she whispered. "Tell me about it."

"It's bad," he replied savagely. "Not a ship has made port. The Four-fifty-six-D was sighted in the televisior awhile ago. She was going down fast. She wasn't off her course, but she had dropped far below the bouyancy level into the sub-stratosphere. Her weight seemed too much for even her emergency lift propellers to take her up again. All we can guess is that she sank into the sea."

Varna Roth shuddered. "Horrible!" she gasped.

Her troubled lips were so invitingly close to his face that he kissed her. Then he looked searchingly into her violet-blue eyes.

"But it's not just my worries that you're sharing," he stated probingly. "What else is bothering you? How's your father?"

"He had some sort of attack today," she said. "It baffled the physician who attended him. Naturally I'm worried."

"Naturally," Hyatt agreed gently. "I'm sorry to hear he isn't well. But I don't think there's much to worry about. Eighty years of age isn't much, when you consider his life-expectancy should be around a hundred and ten. What sort of attack was it?"

"That's what no one is able to tell me. Dad had Nat Larcher with him at lunch."

Larcher was president of Eastern Seaboard Airways.

"I think that explains it," Hyatt said. "Your father's trouble, I mean. You know Larcher."

"Larcher worries are everybody's worries—according to Larcher," Varna

said, with a suddenly relieved laugh. "I suppose he did alarm Dad too much about these air catastrophes."

That slight frown on Hyatt's forehead tightened.

"This time," he said quietly, "there's every reason for the people on this continent to share Larcher's worries. This can't go on, you know. Europe can be starved out inside of ten days. America has become like a corner grocery store to the other side, what with the ever-increasing speed and capacity of our stratoships. The wholesalers simply don't lay in large supplies in Europe anymore."

Varna's deep blue eyes looked grave.

"I hadn't thought of that," she admitted. "But what can anybody do about it?"

BILL HYATT looked across the domelike room at the chronometer.

"The Nine-seventy-five-F, a freighter, leaves the harbor inside of thirty minutes. I think I'll run out there now and follow its course right along with the dispatcher."

Varna clutched Bill's arm. Her level brows pulled down into a worried frown.

"Bill, isn't that the ship your pal Frank Kenna is master pilot on?"

Hyatt nodded. "And if anybody can lick this thing, Kenna can."

"But surely they won't let him go!"

"You don't know Kenna the way I do," Hyatt said. "The man doesn't live who could stop him."

From Hyatt's office to the air harbor was a fifteen-minute journey via the tube. Arriving at the huge field, the boundary lights of which seemed to be at the distant horizon, Bill and Varna found the 975-F. She was drawn up between two loading towers, where cranes lowered food into her hold.

She would carry food for Europe—old, war-ravished Europe. In the last conflict that had spread entirely across the Eastern Hemisphere, a poison gas had been employed, which had burned the soil, destroying forever the fertility of the farm lands. Asia and North Africa had become vast desert wastes. The dwindling populations of their countries had crowded into Europe,

but there had been no food, no fertile lands on which to produce it.

Now, in this era of peace, Europe had become one enormous nation of manufacturers, depending entirely upon the agricultural products of the Western World for food.

Bill and Varna found Frank Kenna standing outside the office of the Eastern Seaboard Company, talking to none other than Nat Larcher himself. The president of the company was a short, square-shouldered man, with a perfectly hairless head and slightly protruding eyes. As Bill and Varna approached, they heard Larcher say to the lanky pilot:

"I have given orders for all ships to be grounded, except the freighter you are flying, Pilot Kenna. If you want to refuse to fly the Nine-seventy-five-F tonight, you may do so without running the risk of earning a demerit."

Kenna thrust out an angular chin and shook his helmeted head.

"I'll get through, sir. Somebody's got to do it."

Abruptly Kenna saw Bill and Varna. His wide lips stretched in a smile, and he took three huge strides to meet Hyatt. He shook the chief inspector's hand, nodded genially to Varna.

"I wondered how long it would be before you showed up, you old bloodhound."

Hyatt didn't smile. He gripped Kenna's hand hard, searched the flier's face with his keen gray eyes.

"I could arrest you and keep you here on the ground, Kenna. Don't you realize you're flying out into a great guess tonight?"

KENNA kept smiling. Nothing ever damped his good humor. He looked out over the lighted field, saw the huge stratoships that were clumped together near the repair shops. A tall wire fence had been thrown up around them. Guards carrying automatic rifles paced back and forth.

"All this progress in air transportation wasn't achieved by grounding fliers when they were about to go out into a great guess, as you call it, Bill," Kenna said. "Suppose I do put off flying tonight. It can't be put off forever, you know. People in Europe will get hun-

gry. Men, women, and kids have to have food. I'm thinking mostly of the kids, I guess. And when I think that way, I can't quit. And nobody can make me quit."

"I could order Kenna to stay on the ground," Nat Larcher declared, grinning wryly. "But I don't want to start a mutiny."

"That's it, sir," Kenna said. "There certainly would be one hell of a loud and bloody revolt. I can give you a promise on that."

Larcher took Kenna's right hand in both of his. His protruding eyes fastened hard on the master pilot's lean face.

"Best of luck, Kenna," he said huskily.

The pilot laughed. "I never needed luck yet. Just give me a beam to ride on and I'll make it."

Striding to the 975-F, he swung onto the lower step of a tower that reached out a gleaming gang-plank toward the pilot cabin of the ocean-spanning, food-laden freighter.

Larcher, Bill Hyatt, and Varna Roth stood unhappily at the door of the president's office and watched in somber silence.

They saw the two auxiliary helicopters fasten themselves to the wings of the stratoship freighter. The helicopters were called "tugs," after the small power-boats of ancient times that used to pull giant ocean liners in and out of water harbors. Shortly the tugs would roar and grunt, hauling the great ship into the stratosphere for which it had been designed. Seven hours later, the 975-F would be lowered by other tugs to a European port—if nothing happened! But things—nameless things—*had* been happening.

Larch, Bill and Varna waved back at Frank Kenna as he appeared at the pilot window. A light glowed on the snout of the ship, signaling that the starting time had been reached. The great horizontal props of the helicopters began to turn. When the mobile loading towers rolled back from the sides of the ship, the roar of the tugs became deafening, confusing, thought-deadening. The ship lifted smoothly, with deceptive ponderousness, rising to fly into the deadly unknown. . . .

CHAPTER II

The Wall

BILL HYATT'S heart was beating at a furious rate. Why, he didn't know. Stratosphere flights were as common as a bus trip of ancient days and a hundred times safer. But somehow the take-off of the 975-F gave him the same uneasy feeling he got whenever he watched an experimental rocket being launched for another futile attempt to reach Venus. Varna Roth must have felt the same way.

"Bill," she said, "do you remember the last time you and I were out here? We watched a band of explorers who were rocket-bound for Venus. You said then that man was not yet ready to bridge the gap between the planets."

Bill remembered that night. He remembered the faint, far-away voice of some super-scientist on Venus, speaking over the radio, warning the men of Earth not to make the attempt. The people of Venus, much more advanced in science than the people of Earth, had tried to bridge that black sea of space years ago, and had failed. That night, the Venusians had pleaded with the men of Earth not to make the attempt.

But of course the rocket crew hadn't listened. Important as life was, progress was even more vital. Weeks later, a twisted, molten lump of metal had been found in the North African desert. Inside the wrecked monster that had once been a rocket, the charred bodies of the explorers had been found.

Both Bill and Varna seemed to possess tragic foresight. They were as fearful for Frank Kenna and the crew of the 975-F as they had been for those men on the rocket bound for Venus. They watched until the lights of the freighter were as a moving constellation of stars in the heavens. Then came the distant, deep-throated roar of the freighter's motors that told them the helicopter tugs were about to detach themselves from the wings.

Nat Larcher plucked Bill Hyatt's sleeve. Bill turned, looked into the eyes of the Eastern Seaboard's president.

Larcher's eyes looked like marbles that had been stuck onto a billiard ball of a head.

"What do we do now, Inspector?" he asked.

"I'm going to watch that flight from beginning to the — to the end," Bill said quietly, deliberately correcting his falter.

"We don't have to go to the dispatcher's office," Larcher replied. "Come in here with me. I have a relay unit from the dispatcher's office and a visa-screen."

The door of Larcher's office was little more than a kiosk that covered the steps which led into a vast underground apartment. It was Larcher's strange idea of a home. Here he could maintain a constant hold on the vast transportation industry which he directed.

Larcher was a European by birth. In his younger days, he had been forced to flee his native land because he had become involved in political intrigue. America had offered him a home, and he had rapidly become one of the country's leading executives. Because Larcher was a European, Bill Hyatt was not surprised to find one room of the underground apartment devoted to a botanical collection. He mused that it was curious how the very sterility of European soil prompted the typical European to fall in love with growing things.

BILL and Varna followed Larcher through a huge conservatory, where plants from all over the world bloomed in artificial sunlight. Hyatt came to a stop in front of a foliage bed.

"What's this stuff, Mr. Larcher?" he asked.

Larcher laughed. "I'm an ardent collector, am I not?" That's not particularly ornamental, but it has an interesting history."

Bill nodded soberly, his eyes narrowed thoughtfully.

"*Datura meteloides*, isn't it?"

If Larcher had had any eyebrows worthy of the name, he would have raised them. Varna Roth, who always felt proud of Bill's amazing range of knowledge, told Larcher that he would be surprised how much Bill knew. He

had often astonished her father, who was a famous building designer, with his startlingly profound understanding of architecture.

"A policeman," Bill explained modestly, "is supposed to know a little about everything and not much about anything. Let's get to the visa-screen, Larcher."

The president opened a door and stood aside. They entered a room that was not large. One of the walls was entirely occupied by the visa-screen of a television outfit. A man with an egg-shaped head and upstanding honey-colored hair was seated at the control panel. When Larcher entered, he snapped out of his chair and stood at attention.

"Howards," Larcher ordered, "you will plug in on the chief dispatcher's office."

"Yes," Hyatt said. "I'll want to talk with the dispatcher."

The man with the honey-colored hair seated himself stiffly at the controls. A moment later, the visa-screen showed the interior of the dispatcher's office, including the mammoth visa-screen of that office—a sort of picture within a picture.

A light glowed on the panel in Larcher's room. The blond man called Howards turned to Hyatt.

"You may transmit now, Chief Inspector," he stated.

"Dispatcher," Hyatt said, speaking at the spectacled man visible on the visa-screen, "I want to talk to Frank Kenna on Nine-seventy-five F. Bring the ship in on your screen, please. I want to follow his course closely. I am Inspector Hyatt."

The chief dispatcher manipulated his controls. Almost instantly the flying freighter appeared on the screen. Like a silvery streak across the darkness, her wing lights were glowing defiantly. They could hear the dispatcher's voice.

"Pilot Kenna, Inspector Hyatt wishes to talk to you."

"Bill, you old damn fool!" Frank Kenna's voice boomed. "Go take a walk. You can relax. Nine-seventy-five-F is right on schedule, riding high on the beam."

"Keep me posted, Frank," Hyatt said. "I'm with you in this all the way."

"Okay," Kenna called back.

Mentally Bill mapped the course of the freighter. She would be dropping south steadily now, heading toward Bermuda. There was a beam relay station on the island that pointed with an invisible finger across the Atlantic to the freighter's destination.

Instead of watching the lights of the freighter on the screen and waiting for further reports from her pilot, the president said he would go out and order some refreshment.

NO sooner had Larcher left the room than Varna leaned forward out of the near-gloom of the television room. She put her trembling hand on Hyatt's knee.

"Bill, what's Larcher's idea of having those grounded ships out there guarded? Did you notice the temporary fence?"

"I did. Larcher's a European, don't forget—a man who's constantly on the lookout for foul play. He suspects that these disasters might be the result of sabotage. He had the Nine-seventy-five-F double-checked before it started out. He's got the other ships closely guarded."

Larcher returned shortly ahead of a servant who brought refreshing drinks for them. Bill Hyatt looked at the proffered tray and shook his head.

"Come, take something, Inspector," Larcher urged. "If you intend to spend seven hours watching that freighter, you'll need nourishment to sustain you."

"Thanks, I really don't want anything," Bill said.

He kept his intently staring eyes on the screen and the unfaltering lights of the 975-F.

Forty minutes went by, and stretched into an hour. Frank Kenna's reports were delivered in a voice that scoffed at Hyatt's warnings. Though they came through with monotonous regularity, Hyatt didn't relax, nor did Varna. Her fingers were gripped tightly on his wrist. The blond man at the control panel sat as though he had a rod of iron in place of a spine. The spectacled dispatcher in the freighter's European destination was no less tense.

Suddenly the silver streak that

marked the freighter vanished from the screen!

Hyatt sprang to his feet, saw the dispatcher spin a dial on his panel, focusing frantically. Once more the 975-F came into view.

"Pilot Kenna!" quavered the dispatcher tautly. "You lost altitude."

There wasn't any answer for several moments. When it finally came, Frank Kenna's voice was calm but not exactly cocky.

"So I notice," he said.

Bill Hyatt went over to Howards' control panel and spoke quietly into the transmitter.

"Frank, you'd better turn back."

There was no answer.

THE 975-F kept constantly slipping from the visa-screen, only to be brought back by the frantic efforts of the dispatcher.

"Frank, can't you hear me?" Bill demanded sharply.

"Yes," Kenna replied. "I can hear you, all right. But I'm going through. Somebody's got to."

"No," Hyatt said. "Not you, Frank. You're dropping steadily."

"I'm going through," Kenna retorted. His voice was strained, unnatural.

"I can arrest you for insubordination!" Hyatt shouted.

Larcher added his worried plea.

"Kenna, if you do not value your life, think of the ship and cargo. I order you to return to port at once."

The sky freighter slipped out of sight again. When the dispatcher brought it once more into focus, not even the most dexterous manipulation of the dials could keep it there. Now and then the falling ship would flash onto the screen, but it was visual torture to watch it. The motors of the freighter were pushed to the limit. Their straining roar came through clearly on the radio.

"Kenna, turn back!"

Hyatt clenched his fists until the fingernails bit into his palms.

"Turning back now," Frank bellowed shakily above the motor noise. "I'll try to make Bermuda. I'll try—"

The sinking stratoship appeared briefly on the screen, her nose pointing

westward. Before it dived deep into airways which it had never been designed to navigate, Bill Hyatt saw something he had not noticed before. The ship should have appeared as a silver color on the screen. Instead, it had a definitely brownish cast.

For a moment, only the roar of the freighter's motors could be heard within the room. Then came Kenna's voice, sounding as faint and faraway as a voice from another world.

"Bill, I can't break through! I can't do it. It's a wall! It's a—"

There was such sudden silence that it hurt their eardrums.

Slowly Hyatt sank into his chair as the visa-screen darkened. The bright metal knobs on the control panel in front of him were like many pointed stars to his eyes.

"Bill," Varna said, her voice low and choked, "does that mean Frank's ship is—doomed?"

He couldn't answer. But he thought she could guess.

* * *

DR. HAMEL CARTWRIGHT was a consultant for Eastern Seaboard Airways. He leaned back comfortably in his chair and took slow drags from his pipe. He had been stationed at the Bermuda radio beam relay station for several months now, and he was acting as official host to Bill Hyatt of the International Police.

From Cartwright's glassed-in porch, Bill Hyatt could look out across the sea that had swallowed the 975-F and its crew three nights before. The stars, like pinholes in a vast sheet of black paper, twinkling wisely, as if they alone held the answer to the riddle of the missing stratoships.

For three days and four nights, there had been no traffic between America and Europe. Already the teeming population of industrial Europe was tightening its belt. In an effort to avoid the invisible wall that separated the two hemispheres, a robot-controlled plane had been sent out for California, bound for Asia. Following the plane with the televisior, Hyatt had learned that there was a similar wall in the Pacific, about four hundred miles off the coast.

Dr. Hamel Cartwright listened to this explanation from Bill Hyatt. Finally he voiced the opinion which had been headlined in the newscasts the day before.

"The Earth must be belted by a force-wall," he said.

"That theory has given people something to sink their teeth into, anyway," Hyatt said. "But I think it's all wrong. I admit that Frank Kenna's last words were that he couldn't break through some sort of wall. If it had been a wall of force, though, would the freighter have bogged down the way she did? Maybe I'm nuts, but I got the idea the Nine-seventy-five-F hit a storm of molten lava."

"That's being unscientific," Cartwright snorted.

"Maybe, but it's a pretty good comparison. If we could only find some of the old ocean-going craft—something like that ship, the *Queen Mary*, mentioned in the history books—it would come in pretty handy right now. It might keep Europe from starving. As it is, I could find only three small power-boats to use in hunting for the lost stratoship."

"Are you expecting to hear from your investigators soon?"

"They ought to produce some results tonight," Hyatt said. "Then maybe we'll be nearer the truth. You scientists have blamed this thing on Northern Lights and Sun spots—"

"Force-wall," Cartwright corrected. "At least, I'm original."

"Well, until we've seen the wreck, we're just guessing blindly."

A voice intruded on the thoughtful silence that followed. It came from the radio which rested on the table beside Cartwright's elbow.

"Calling Inspector Hyatt."

The doctor picked up the transmitter and handed it to Hyatt. The voice was that of Parsons, one of the men on the three power-boats that were being used to search for the wreck of the 975-F.

"Our electrical soundings indicate a large deposit of aluminum alloy on the ocean bed, about three miles off-shore," Parsons reported. "We can get to it in a depth sphere without any pressure trouble."

"Good," Hyatt said. "Pick me up at

the dock immediately."

"But there's something else, Inspector. According to our instrument readings, another metal is clearly indicated besides the aluminum and steel alloys you'd expect to find in a stratoship. It's bothered us a good deal because we can't explain it. But we've checked our readings carefully. We're certain that there's pure gold mixed up in it somewhere!"

"Gold?" Dr. Cartwright whirled his chair around and stared at Hyatt and the radio. "Your man's crazy!" he snapped. "Gold, the most useless of all metals? Gold on a stratoship? Why, the ancients couldn't even make decent pen-points out of the stuff without tipping them with iridium. Since the world stopped using gold as a medium of exchange, after America found she had it all and couldn't do anything with it—Why, the stuff's valueless!"

"It's a sure thing that no gold was alloyed with the metal of the stratoship," Hyatt confessed. "Unless—"

He stopped, suddenly looking seaward. There was something in his gray eyes betraying that he saw farther than the foamy white caps that dashed against the rocky shore.

"Unless what?" Cartwright asked.

"Oh, just a crazy idea of mine."

The inspector left the room abruptly.

CHAPTER III

The Golden Beam

BY the time Hyatt reached the rickety dock, one of the ancient motor craft was ready to come alongside. Hyatt took a long-legged stride that landed him in the boat. The man at the wheel put around and headed out to sea.

There were two of Hyatt's deputy inspectors on board. They fired a continuous stream of questions at him, but got only unwilling, half-formed answers. Bill's mind was busy with the vague notion he had conceived while on Dr. Cartwright's porch. It was almost too incredible to be put into words.

The anchored boat, with which Par-

sons had marked the location of what he believed to be the sunken stratoship, had a depth sphere in tow. Parsons and Hyatt squeezed through the hatch of the sphere and were sealed in its cramped interior. Hastily the necessary air-hose and electrical connections were made.

"The wreck, if that's what it is," Parsons said, "is lodged on a reef down there."

"He turned on a small bulb that illuminated the sphere's confines as it was lowered toward the ocean bed. There he switched on the powerful polarized searchlights with which the device was equipped.

It was not the first time Hyatt had descended in a depth sphere, but he had never quite got used to the idea. A strange sense of depression inevitably came over him. He felt like a prying intruder, sneaking into a dark and forbidden world, when the light beams cut through gloom that until then had probably never been dispelled.

Looking through a port, Hyatt got his first glimpse of the sunken ship. It seemed precariously balanced on a pinnacle of rock which must have pierced the metal hull. It looked like a gigantic eagle poised for flight on a mountain peak.

Hyatt clutched his assistant's arm.

"Look!" he whispered.

He brought one of the incredibly efficient lights to bear on the craft. Every part of the stratoship was plated with gold!

"But—but how could it fly?" Parsons stammered.

"Yes," Hyatt said quietly. "How could it fly? The answer is pretty obvious when you consider that the atomic weight of gold is almost as high as that of lead. It couldn't fly."

"But where did the gold come from?"

Hyatt shook his head, his face grim.

"Surface, and make it in a hurry," he ordered.

"I don't understand," Parsons complained as he jerked at the controls.

"I don't either. But I was thinking awhile ago, sitting on Cartwright's porch. I was thinking that there's gold in the sea—lots of it, suspended in infinitely small particles. I remember reading something about it in an old

chemistry text. It was right after the Second World War that some scientist discovered a way of extracting gold from sea water by ionization. But the scientists's discovery came too late to be of much service.

"If you remember your history, the Second World War was an economic one. The old order of economics and financing battled against a system of barter. Wars achieve nothing, we all agree. But at least we learned from that war the absurdity of having a precious metal for a medium of exchange. That was about three hundred years ago..."

Hyatt's voice drifted off into silence as he toyed with the idea.

THE depth sphere rose rapidly, with Parsons working efficiently to neutralize the air and water pressure. When Hyatt climbed out of the open hatch after they reached the surface, he heard a hoarse cry. It came from one of the power-boats that had drifted out into the darkness.

Hyatt and Parsons scrambled into the boat that had drawn the depth sphere. As they did so, the boat from which the cry had come started cutting across the waves toward them. The man at the wheel shouted Hyatt's name, cut his motor, allowed a swell to lift his craft and slap it down alongside Hyatt's boat. Hyatt ordered searchlights turned on the craft.

"Look, Inspector!" cried the man at the wheel of the other boat. "Look at Paul up there in the bow. Out there a way, it's raining gold! Look at Paul."

The man in the bow of the boat leaped across to Hyatt's launch. He was holding out his hands and arms in front of him. His flesh was covered with particles of gold that snowed off under Hyatt's touch. Even the man's face was gilded in spots.

"It got into my lungs, Inspector," the man gasped huskily. "I was forward in the boat and noticed it was getting hard to breath. When I lighted my pipe, I saw my hands. The front end of our boat seemed to be in a sort of gold storm."

The man pointed back over his shoulder with a gilded finger.

Bill sprang to the searchlight and swung it around in the indicated di-

rection. The beam revealed nothing until he manipulated the lens control, flattening the beam. The effect was like that of a knife-edge of sunlight filtering into a dark room, revealing particles of dust floating in the air. Only this dust gleamed dully, and it wasn't floating. It was racing apparently with the speed of light — straight upward into the blackness — a moving wall of gold particles that reached into the stratosphere and beyond!

A beam of gold, raying off into space, an impenetrable wall of gold, so far as stratoships were concerned. . . .

Hyatt turned away from the searchlight and looked upward. High above the western horizon, the planet Venus, home of a people from whom Earthmen had heard but had never seen, mocked him with its brilliant, twinkling eye.

It smashed home to him as never before, the stark wonder of that far-off civilization on Venus. What minds those creatures must have! They had become so advanced in their experiments with radio and television that they had actually looked in upon their neighbors of Earth. Had they not proved their claim of super-intelligence by learning how to speak as Earthmen spoke?

Yet always those communications from Venus had been in a superior voice—a voice that barely tolerated the lesser creatures of Earth. They had extracted information from the generous Earthmen, and had given almost nothing in return. Selfish were the voices from Venus. Like all Earthmen of his day, Hyatt longed to think the Venusians were humanitarians, because of their great intelligence. But he had to admit to himself that the voice from Venus had seemed utterly selfish.

IN brief, the facts compiled by Hyatt's staff of technicians were these—

The wall of moving gold particles ringed Earth and extended into outer space. The source of the gold was sea water itself. The particles had been ionized so that each was highly sensitive to other electrical charges. A force remote from Earth was attracting these electrically charged particles.

The nature of the force itself was not beyond understanding. Nothing more complicated was needed to attract the ionized gold than some equally powerful body of directly opposite charge.

It was the source of the force and how it was controlled that baffled the best scientists of Earth.

The "gold plating" of the stratoships was readily explained. Charged particles of gold, traveling at tremendous speed on this unknown beam of force from outer space, bombarded any object within their path. Streaking at enormous speeds through the thinnest atmosphere, the stratoships became statically charged. Naturally that made the gold particles cling to the metal of the ship, weighing it down.

In fact, so small were the ionized particles of gold that almost any object coming between them and their mysterious destination was certain to become coated with gold.

All this, Hyatt could understand. Understanding, however, and doing something about it were two widely different things. With a hunch that was born of sheer desperation, he had ordered the great new space-radio station to attempt contacting the intelligences of Venus. As yet, there had been no answer to Earth's call.

Immediately he put his men to work on a study of current requirements from various power transmission stations. He figured that ionization of the gold particles would require a great deal of current. Any unexpected drain from any of the power stations was to be carefully checked.

But the stream of gold particles into outer space continued without let-up. The effect in Europe was horrible, terrifying. The Old World was hungry, and starving men do strange and unreasonable things.

Late that afternoon, following Hyatt's return to the mainland, a message reached his office from one of his European agents. A squad of light sub-stratosphere planes had covered the continent, its great cities and important mining territories. Hand-bills had been scattered, violent enough to alarm the most phlegmatic of men — and Bill Hyatt was not phlegmatic.

Bread or bombs,
Which will you have?
We can deliver either
On short notice.

Such scraps of paper had kindled Europe before now. The International Police were desperately trying to find the source of these hand-bills, yet go about their work sanely. But Europe was still starving and thinking murderous thoughts and growling angrily.

Curiously enough, blame for the whole catastrophe fell upon the shoulders of America. Reflecting upon that point, Hyatt could hardly see how it could be otherwise. In turning back the pages of history, anyone could see that Europe was constantly blaming America for its ills. America had been accused of not entering European wars and thus prolonging them. She had been blamed for entering European wars and prolonging them. European poverty had inevitably been called the result of America prosperity.

THE following day, there was still no word from Venus, nor had Hyatt's agent discovered any unusual drain on the power-transmitting stations. And something occurred which no one but Bill Hyatt had expected to happen.

At three o'clock that afternoon, the President of America called Bill Hyatt's office and said that something had to be done immediately. The ban on shipping, created by Hyatt and the International Police in cooperation with Eastern Seaboard Airways, had to be lifted.

"That's impossible, Mr. President," Bill said into the radio transmitter. "Lifting the ban won't dissolve a wall of gold that can't be broken through or surmounted."

"But, good Lord, Man!" the president raged. "I've been handed an ultimatum from the European General Council. The claim is that we are trying to extend a stranglehold on Europe, trying to dominate the nations of the East. They've gathered an enormous fleet of stratoships loaded with bombs. We haven't enough air defenses."

"We have," Hyatt said. "We've got a wall of gold that's not of our making. If a strato-bomber can break through,

I'd like to see her do it. I tell you, this situation is beyond our control. Why isn't Venus answering my persistent calls? Answer that, and you may have the answer to the whole mess. The best we can do is try to prevent the European bomber fleet from annihilating itself in the golden wall. But to consider the matter selfishly, I don't see what we have to worry about. They can't touch us."

The President and the Minister of Defense, though, were badly worried about the bombers that had massed for an attack on America. What if the wall of gold didn't hold? Suppose the inexplicable wall stopped existing as suddenly as it had come into existence!

With these questions troubling them, they went to the arsenal at Newark and opened its enormous locked doors. Instantly panic broke loose in America. The arsenal, a supposedly impregnable fortress had been looted of all its powerful Archimedes Earth-Mover bombs!

The International Police went to work, quickly arresting the guards at the arsenal. As the result of questioning, which was carefully checked by the most advanced lie detectors, it was learned that the guards were all hirelings of somebody they knew only as the "Master."

But that wasn't the only headache for Bill Hyatt. The arsenal was the masterpiece of a really great designer. Its many doors were equipped with special combination locks, the secret of which was known only to the President, the Secretary of Defense—and, of course, the man who designed the locks. And the designer's name was Archibald Roth. He was Varna Roth's father!

CHAPTER IV

Voice from Venus

AFTER dark that evening, while Hyatt was waiting anxiously for word from Venus, Varna Roth was announced. She practically strode into the chief inspector's high-domed chamber. There was high color in her cheeks and dangerous lights in her blue eyes.

"Bill, what do you mean by arresting Dad!" she demanded.

Hyatt got up from his desk, came around it slowly. His gray eyes looked as though they had forgotten what it was like to close in peaceful slumber.

"Your father isn't arrested, Varna," he said. "He's merely being held for questioning."

"You let him go instantly! He didn't have anything to do with this trouble at the arsenal. Aren't you ashamed to pick on an old man that way? You let him go, Bill! Do you hear me?"

He shrugged hopelessly.

"There's nothing I can do about it. Your father will be released as soon as he has been questioned. Varna, I don't have to tell you I think he's absolutely above reproach. But this isn't a personal affair. It's an international crisis."

As she glared up at his pale, haggard face, the angry lights in her eyes softened. Worry had dug deep lines around his mouth and across his forehead.

"Bill, you're dead on your feet! You don't know what you're doing. Why, I'll bet you don't even know that a button on your desk is glowing right now!"

"Where?" he blurted wildly.

He whirled around and stared at the column of buttons. The space-radio station indicator was flashing red. Even rigid discipline could not steady his finger when he pressed the button.

"We've picked up the carrier wave from Venus, Inspector," said the disembodied voice of the radio operator.

"Good! Put me right on their wave."

Eagerly Varna ran to Hyatt and caught his arm, felt him trembling with excitement.

"Is it really Venus?" she asked breathlessly.

"Hush," he whispered tensely. "Just keep quiet and play. . . ."

A thin musical note vibrated from the loudspeaker concealed in the ceiling and lingered with unbearable poignancy, growing deeper and more distant before it died away.

"Venus?" Hyatt breathed almost reverently. "This is Inspector Hyatt, of the International Police."

Across space, at the speed of light, his voice traveled. But nine minutes had to pass before the voice from Venus

could reply. The necessary time lapse had never seemed so maddening. . . .

"This is Venus. Hello Earth. What do you want with us, Inspector?"

Hyatt flushed as if he had been slapped in the face. The voice from Venus was cold as outer space, impersonal as a genius talking to a humble aborigine.

"I'm sorry I have to annoy you," he said ironically. "If you've been listening to our newscasts lately, you must know the tough situation we're facing."

After nine minutes, the voice replied.

"We are entirely aware of your predicament, which we are watching with interest. Accept our sympathies. We have noted a vast fleet of stratosphere warships flying toward your Western Hemisphere."

So hysterical Europe was already attacking! The super-brains of Venus had discovered the fact even before the International Police of Earth were aware of it. Hyatt clenched his fists, making himself speak politely to the voice that continually slapped his face.

"In the last newcast from Venus, we Earthmen got the impression that an enormous new source of your precious substance *Arnerium* had recently been discovered. Is that true? We would also like to know if you use *Arnerium* as a medium of exchange on your planet."

He lit a cigarette and forced himself to remain calm until the nine minutes passed.

"It is true," said the voice from Venus, "that a new source of *Arnerium* has been discovered. We use the substance as a medium of exchange."

Hyatt's lips tightened to a thin line. He turned and nodded grimly to Varna.

"Because of this newly discovered source of precious metal, is your currency rapidly depreciating? Isn't there a decreased market value?"

WAITING for his words to reach Venus and the reply to cross space, he sat on a corner of the desk.

"Now we're getting somewhere," he said to Varna. "Everything depends on the answers to this question and the next."

She smiled hopefully and took his hand.

"You are substantially correct," said the voice at last. "We can no longer use *Arnerium* as a medium of exchange, because of its present low value. Seeking a metal to take its place, we discovered a substance in the oceans of Earth. The new metal we call *calabrium*."

"How did you make that discovery?" Hyatt demanded. "Our term for *calabrium* is gold. You certainly couldn't have learned through spectro-analysis that our sea water contains gold. Where did you get the information?"

Varna felt his grip tighten as he waited for the reply.

"That question will not be answered," stated the voice. "It can make no difference to Earth, since the *calabrium* in the oceans was not being used."

"That's exactly what I thought!" the inspector rapped out. "Some person on Earth gave you your information. Name him!"

He shook his head hopelessly, but the tenseness of his grip did not relax. Varna knew he did not really expect an answer.

"We refuse to reveal our source of information. Since Earth was not using the metal in the seas, that loss should be of no importance."

"But when you attract the ionized gold to Venus, you create an impassable wall between our two Hemispheres!" Hyatt shouted. "Do you realize that your piracy is causing starvation in Europe?"

There was an even longer interval of strained silence.

"What do you of Earth intend to do about it?" the voice asked finally.

"Do about it?" Hyatt roared. He slumped, realizing that nothing could be done. "We—"

The unbearably nostalgic musical note that had begun the conversation sounded again. Hyatt gritted his teeth, swore under his breath. The Venusian radio station had signed off.

"Bill," Varna said, "do you really think someone on Earth is low enough to help the Venusians against his own Planet?"

"That's what it looks like. The gold, in order to be drawn to Venus has to be ionized here on Earth. That means

that electrical current is run through the sea water. Since ocean water is salt, it's a natural conductor of electricity. But, we can't find out the source of the electrical current. If we could do that, we could break the barrier in practically no time.

"The most incredible part of the whole business is that Venus, which seems so far advanced in matters of science, should be so far behind us in fundamental economics. Imagine using a precious metal for a medium of exchange! The thing to do is to find the ionization stations. Only we've been looking for them like mad men for the past three days. Then all we have to do is drop a few well placed bombs—"

He had forgotten for the moment that the only ones available were small emergency bombs allotted to the International Police. Another button glowed on his desk. When he pressed it, the voice of the President of America came into the room.

"Hyatt, a fleet of bombers is racing toward America! Europe has declared war!"

"Tell Europe to attack Venus—if it can," Hyatt said.

He turned from the desk to speak to Varna, only to find that she had left the room.

"The air armada of Europe is battering itself to pieces against the wall of gold," the President said bitterly.

IN his way to Archibald Roth's house, Bill Hyatt picked up the report that the President must have heard. While he realized it made good news, he knew it wasn't quite the truth. The strato-bombers were not battering themselves to pieces. They were hurling themselves into the wall of gold, being bogged down as surely as though they had been driven prop-first into quicksand. There was no escape for Europe's air arm, no hope for the poor devils who manned the ships.

Because of a chill-voiced genius on Venus, men of Earth were dying like flies, ignorant of the unconquerable force against which they pitted their puny strength. Nor would failure of the air fleet convince Europe that America was not to be blamed for the tragedy. Europe was ravening with

that madness which comes from starvation.

Bill Hyatt put his air coupé down on the flat roof of Archibald Roth's house. Only a little while before, one of the official planes of the International Police had landed there with Mr. Roth himself. Questioning of the eighty-year-old designer had been fruitless. He had been nearly shocked to death at the implication that he had played traitor to his beloved country.

Bill entered the house through the roof door and went at once to the drawing room, where he knew he would find Archibald Roth. The old man was pacing the floor and puffing out angry clouds of smoke from his cigar. When he saw Bill, he clenched his cigar angrily and glared.

"You're the man who put those officers up to arresting me," he grated. "I'm glad you've come because I want to give you a piece of my mind. After that, of course, you won't care to set foot in this house again. I hope not, anyhow."

Hyatt held up a restraining hand.

"One moment, Mr. Roth. First of all, I had nothing to do with your being arrested, as you call it. But if I obtained the information my men had, I certainly would have insisted on your being held for questioning about the affair at the arsenal. But I want you to understand that you were not arrested. Weren't you treated courteously?"

"I was," Roth snapped. "Except that they strapped me in one of your lie detectors. Oh, yes, they were polite enough. But that's the same as calling me a liar, isn't it?"

"Purely a matter of form," Bill soothed. "I want to know something about the illness you suffered from a few days ago."

"That? Nothing at all compared with the humiliation of tonight's ordeal. Indigestion. It came right after I'd eaten lunch. I can't remember anything that happened once I got up from the table. Doctors thought it was a stroke, but my blood pressure is really below normal."

Archibald Roth went to an ash tray and rested his cigar in the groove. He cocked a glittering eye at Hyatt.

"That what you came here for—to

ask about my health? Don't you want to see Varna?"

"I'd like to," Bill admitted. "She slipped out of my office without even saying good-by. That's not like her. I want to know why she did it."

The old man chuckled. "But you can't. Not here, anyway. She's gone to Niagara."

"Where!" Bill cried, wonderingly if he had heard correctly.

THE city of Niagara had been abandoned since early in the last century, when hydro-electric power had become obsolete. *Hydro-electric power*, his mind repeated. The thought stunned him. Suppose the traitor who was ionizing sea water to make the gold in the oceans available to Venus had taken over the abandoned power plants at Niagara!

"She went to Niagara," the old man repeated. "Went to the air harbor not more than forty-five minutes ago, to charter a plane for Niagara. She's a better investigator than you are. Didn't you think of the power plants at Niagara, when you couldn't place the source of the ionization plants?"

Hyatt banged his fist into his other palm.

"That's it!" he shouted.

Abruptly his face fell. Varna would be daring enough to try to make this investigation alone. The man who permitted the air army of Europe to destroy itself against the wall of gold would not hesitate to eliminate one red-headed meddler, no matter how pretty.

Bill Hyatt raced from the room, ran up the steps to the roof, scrambled into his air coupé. He gunned the light plane across the roof in a perfect take-off and headed for the air harbor.

As he flew, he unhooked the portable radio from his belt and put in a call to Parsons, in the International Police Building.

"Take a squad of men and fly to Niagara," he snapped tensely. "Investigate the old hydro-electric plants there. They may have been put into operation. If they have been, we'll have the source of current used in the ionization stations!"

"Never thought of that," Parsons blurted, obviously disgusted with his

own failure. "That's about the only place they could be getting the current. What should we do—bomb it?"

"No," Hyatt said, think of Varna Roth. He must try to catch up with her before she could reach Niagara. But failing in that, he couldn't risk her death by bombs from his own policemen. "You are to bomb all power lines leading from the hydro-electric plants."

"Right, sir. Hold my wave a moment. Dispatch just in from Europe."

There was a moment of silence, unbroken except by the rattle of crisp paper. Then Parsons spoke again.

"Listen to this, Inspector. It's from our agent in Paris. 'Following report that offensive air fleet has been destroyed in mid-ocean, revolution has broken out in Europe. Internal strife between two factions. The first faction, those loyal to European General Council. Second faction, those willing to accept ultimatum of American dictator known here as the Master.'"

Hyatt took his lower lip between his teeth and bit it hard. Out of vague hunches, a new and recognizable picture was forming. The man behind the ionization stations, which were making possible the theft of ocean gold by Venus, was motivated not by a desire to help Venus out of her financial difficulties, but by his own selfish ambitions. The wall of gold he had helped Venus create had first produced a food panic in Europe, then caused the destruction of the European air force. Now a revolt had resulted.

"Parsons," Hyatt said, "carry out my orders to the letter. First destroy the golden wall by cutting off the power supply to the ionization stations. Second, send a message to the European General Council. Tell them food is on the way and armed forces will be sent to quell revolt if necessary. Third, get this man who is trying to dominate Europe. I'll handle him!"

CHAPTER V

The Tyrant

BILL HYATT shoved forward on the throttle of his little coupé, raced toward the central air harbor. If

he had not been perfectly familiar with the landmarks about the port he might have missed it entirely, for the place was blacked out. But he swept low of the mammoth field, circled it twice. Then he went into a dive directly over the section where the enormous transports and freighters of Eastern Seaboard were being guarded against sabotage.

Leaning far out of his cabin window, he searched the huddle of stratoships that seemed to be racing up to meet the blurring prop of his coupé. On the ground, men were hurrying in and out of the big ships. Hyatt saw that they were carrying long, cigar-shaped cylinders of gleaming metal. They were bombs from the Government arsenal! Bombs to be used to whip Europe into submission!

The man who called himself the Master had only to cut off his wall of gold, fly his air armada to Europe, drop a few of those deadly Earth-moving bombs, and the starving nations would have to submit to the tyrant's demands. Undoubtedly he could hold his position once he had obtained it, with this huge air fleet.

The beam of a searchlight sprang up at Hyatt from the ground, spotted him as he started to level off. A rattling chattering gun blasted tracer shots at his craft. He dived and spun, but luck rode with the bullets. Hyatt heard his motor give a sputtering cough and die.

He wheeled to the left, one wing dipping dangerously close to earth. Leveling with a violent struggle, he set the automatic landing device. He snatched two automatic pistols from leather carriers, threw back the transparent plastic door of the coupé as it landed smoothly and braked to a stop. He jumped from the cabin at the same instant.

Crouched low, he scurried like a rabbit straight for the underground office of Nat Larcher, president of Eastern Seaboard Airways. Hyatt's heart thumped against his chest. He knew the odds were a million to one against him. But he was a policeman, hot on the trail of a mass murderer. He couldn't allow selfish thoughts of his own danger to interfere with doing his duty.

Just outside the door of Larcher's

underground apartment, Hyatt crouched in the shadows and manipulated the controls of the radio hooked to his belt. He put in a call direct to the President of America.

"Hyatt speaking," he said in a quiet, tense voice. "All Eastern Seaboard stratoships are being converted for a bombing raid on Europe. Send men at once to take over the central air harbor. The secret of the golden wall is completely known to me. I am arresting the man who is trying to become dictator of Europe. Do not bomb the central air harbor. Proceed with extreme caution. All the stratoships are laden with enough explosives to wipe out the entire city."

Before entering the kiosk that led to Nat Larcher's apartment, Bill Hyatt lifted off the plastic top of his radio, reached into the mechanism, dropped a jumper wire over two binding posts. Fortunately a policeman had to know a little about everything, including a method of transforming a two-way portable radio into a beat-note oscillator. That might help him pull a bluff that would save Europe—and possibly Bill Hyatt, if the going got as rough as he thought it would.

HE pushed through the kiosk door, hurried down the steps and through Larcher's conservatory, where strange plants thrived in artificial sunlight. A low-pitched humming sound came from the room in which Hyatt and Varna Roth had watched the wreck of the 975-F on Larcher's visa-screen.

Cautiously he opened the door. In the semi-dark room, he saw Larcher seated at the controls of a remote-control unit, such as was used to pilot stratoplanes from the ground. The visa-screen was illuminated. On its surface, Hyatt could see the silvery streak and the wing-tip lights of a small stratoplane.

"Larcher," he stated with ominous calm, "you are under arrest for high treason in America and Europe. You are accused of robbing the Government arsenal and conspiring to establish yourself as dictator of Europe."

Larcher turned slowly, looked into Bill Hyatt's guns. His protruding eyes

met the inspector's gaze steadily.

"Oh, I was expecting you," he said. "I have been tapping in on your police radio wave. I've heard all the orders you have given for the cutting of my power lines between Niagara and my ionization stations. I'm not quite ready to turn off the golden wall, so I wish you'd countermand that order. I don't want it interfered with until my fleet is ready for a triumphal entry into Europe, where I will become dictator."

Hyatt laughed. "You don't suppose I'm going to do what you want, do you?" he asked sarcastically.

Larcher nodded gravely, his eyes coldly glittering. "Look at the visa-screen. That ship is within ten minutes of the wall of gold—and death for its single occupant. The occupant happens to be Miss Varna Roth. I'm flying her plane by remote control for she is securely bound inside. Before your men can reach Niagara, she will reach the wall of gold. I think I have you exactly where I want you, Inspector."

Frigid hands took hold of Hyatt's heart and squeezed it in a freezing grip. He scarcely felt the muzzle of a gun held in the hand of Howards, Larcher's blond assistant, as it rammed brutally against his spine. He scarcely heard the order to drop his guns.

"Countermand your order and I will wheel Miss Roth's plane about and bring her back to safety," Larcher said quietly. "I am determined that nothing shall interfere with my plans. They are perfect. I have given Europe a choice of food and my dictation, or bombs of destruction. Europe will accept food and the dictates of the Master."

Hyatt's guns clattered to the floor. He moistened his dry lips.

"I would gladly countermand that order if it were possible," he breathed. "Unfortunately I have converted my radio into an oscillator which I can pitch to a certain vibration. It will be identical with the keynote of the M-six-eight bombs you are loading on those planes out there. Archimedes bombs have to be handled gently, I think you'll agree. Striking their keynote, of course, will cause them to explode. That keynote happens to be G-eight-fifty."

Hyatt touched the switch of his radio.

A low-pitched whistle that constantly mounted to a higher tone and greater volume came from his radio. Larcher paled.

"You're bluffing, Inspector!" he rasped.

"Am I? That will be for you to decide. And you'd better decide it in a hurry. When my oscillator reaches G at eight hundred and fifty vibrations, the entire air harbor will become an enormous shell hole. Everything in this area will be blown from here to Venus."

LARCHER staggered to his feet. He took three steps toward Bill. His eyes goggled at the radio that was whining up, up, up to a piercing shriek.

"Knock that radio to the floor, Howards!" he yelled at the top of his voice.

"That won't stop the explosion," Hyatt said, grinning despite the whiteness of his face. "We've practically reached the keynote now."

Howards made a lethal error. He tried to use his gun barrel to knock the radio down and silence its forbidding squeal. The gun was an automatic rifle. No soon had it dipped to Hyatt's radio than the inspector seized it by the barrel and twisted it from the blond man's hands. Howards got the butt of the rifle in the face. The blow had enough power behind it to drive his front teeth down his throat. He collapsed, choking.

Larcher snatched for one of Bill's automatic pistols. He came half out of his crouch before the butt of the rifle smashed down on his skull. The tyrant fell flat on his face, blood gushing from his opened skull.

Bill sprang to the remote control device. Twirling the controls, he watched Varna Roth's plane in the visa-screen as it wheeled about and headed away from the wall of gold. It flew back toward America and safety.

"Varna, darling," he quavered into the radio transmitter, "are you all right? You're not losing altitude?"

Hyatt had never heard a sweeter sound than Varna Roth's voice as she assured him of her safety. He sighed explosively, sat back in the chair, devoting himself entirely to guiding Varna safely back to land.

On the landing field rolled the dis-

tant crack of rifles. It was a mere flurry of gunfire, followed by dread silence. Bill Hyatt wrenched open a door of the underground apartment. He turned to meet an Army captain in full uniform.

"The damned renegades gave up with hardly a struggle," said the Army officer bitterly. "Where's this man who wanted to be dictator of Europe?"

Hyatt pointed a thumb at Larcher, who lay bleeding and limp on the floor.

"There's the man who wanted to run the world. He learned the secret of the locks at the arsenal from Archibald Roth, but the old designer didn't know anything about it. They had lunch together that day, and he drugged Roth's drink with an extract of the *datura meteloides* plant. Larcher had some of the stuff growing in his plant collection.

"It's rather a rare herb for this day and age. But three centuries ago, the stuff was used to make 'truth serum', a substance used by the ancient criminologists. When I heard the symptoms of illness which followed Roth's luncheon

with Larcher, I thought of the *datura* plants in Larcher's collection and put two and two together. That's about all. Of course, he was going to sell them his own products."

WITHOUT the leadership of Larcher, the revolution in Europe came to a speedy conclusion. The traitors would be punished and peace would be restored. Hyatt's men destroyed the ionization plants and the power lines that led to them, breaking down that golden barrier that stretched from Earth to Venus.

Naturally the people of Venus didn't like that. They radioed appeals to Larcher and there were intercepted by the International Police.

"Tell the voice from Venus," Hyatt said to Parsons, "to seek Mr. Larcher on another planet—a much hotter planet, eh?"

He settled back with Varna Roth in his arms and relaxed for the first time in ten days.



COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE

SECRET OF THE COMET

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by MORT WEISINGER

FOR PLANT INVENTORS

YOU can invent a plant—and patent it!

If the great plant wizard, Luther Burbank, had been able to patent his botanical productions, he would have earned millions. Now, to encourage scientists to invent new plants and fruits, Congress has passed a special act which allows patent protection for all new horticultural creations.

More than 200 patents have been granted thus far. Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes owns patent No. 19—for a "Won't-fade dahlia" that retains its coral red color on bush or when cut, until the very end. Patent No. 40 is for the thornless barberry. Patent



No. 80 is for the flower popularly known as the "Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt Rose."

To be patentable, a plant must be asexually reproduced by grafting, budding, cuttings, layering, division, or by any other method that does not involve the use of seeds.

THE ELECTRIC QUIZ

ROBOT teachers are on the way! Electricity and photography are being used today by Federal and State civil-service commissions to help correct examination papers!

Recently New York started using an electric scoring machine which can accurately score about 800 civil service examination papers an hour. The machine is designed to grade short-answer

tests of the multiple choice or "true-false" type. Example: *The mayor of N. Y. is (a) Valentine (b) Dewey (c) La Guardia (d) Lehman.*

Candidates check their answers with a special graphite pencil which makes an electrically conductive mark that automatically registers the score when the papers are placed in the machine.

THE FASTEST INSECT

DISCOVERED—the most accomplished insect aviator in the world!

The most brilliant insect aviator in the world is the dragonfly. It is among select company which has mastered the supreme maneuver of flight: the ability to stop dead on a fixed point in the air and then, still facing the same way, dart at full speed either backward or sideward.

To enable its "aero engines" to work at top pressure, the dragonfly breathes one hundred and eighteen times a minute.

In addition to its great stunting powers, a dragon fly is also extremely fast—probably the speediest insect in the world. Dr. R. J. Tilyard, well-known Australian entomologist, asserts that the dragonfly can fly at the rate of nearly sixty miles per hour!

THE HUMAN COMPASS

HUMAN beings have an instinctive sense of direction!

In an effort to determine whether human beings possess a sense of direction, similar to that found in animals and birds, a strange experiment was recently conducted.

Dr. Paul D. Woodring, of the Detroit Psychopathic Clinic, selected 100 men and women of varying intelligence and, after blindfolding them, took them to a windowless room.

The subjects of the experiment were

then asked such questions as: "In what direction does New York lie? Where is the North Pole?", etc. Strange to relate, about half of the subjects pointed in the correct direction at once. Others did so after considerable reasoning; still others were hopelessly befuddled.

Dr. Woodring does not think that the good guessers, if guessers they can be called, are endowed with a special sense of direction. But they do owe their ability to early training of some kind.

NON-STOP FLIGHT

THE migration of birds is one of Nature's wonders!

The golden plover, traveling over the ocean, makes the 2,400-mile flight from Nova Scotia to South America apparently without stop, and probably requiring 48 hours of continuous flight. This is accomplished with the consumption of less than two ounces of fuel in the form of body fat.

To be as economical in operation, a 1,000-pound airplane would consume in a 20-mile flight not the gallon of fuel usually required—but only a single pint!

SATELLITE STATISTICS

THERE are twenty-eight known moons in the Solar System!

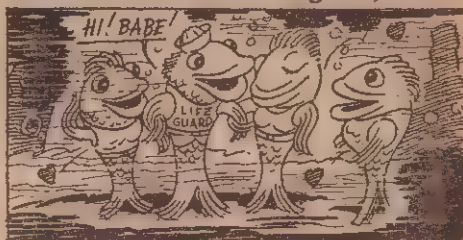
Astronomical statistics point out that there is an average of about three moons for every planet in the Solar System. Three planets own no moons—Mercury, Venus and Pluto. Jupiter leads the list with an entourage of eleven satellites. Saturn is runner-up, with nine celestial companions. Uranus



heads the minor moon league, with four attendants. Mars possesses a pair, and Neptune and Earth own one measly satellite apiece!

DROWNING FISH

FISH may be drowned in water! It's a scientifact that a fish may be drowned in water under certain conditions. This will happen when a fish is placed in water devoid of oxygen, or when certain swift-moving fish, such as



the mackerel, are restricted so that they cannot swim rapidly.

It appears that the current of water produced solely by the opening and closing of the gill covers does not supply oxygen to maintain life in these fish, even though the water is saturated with oxygen.

OUR INCREDIBLE WORLD

THE moon is one of the heavenly bodies which must always be concerned in an eclipse. . . . Even the hardest piece of steel may change its length slightly in the presence of a magnet. . . . Color alone may cause a variation of as much as 10 per cent in the estimation of distance. . . . There is one birth in the U. S. every 14 seconds, 1 death every 22 seconds, making a net gain of one every 35 seconds. . . .

Most hoofed animals have horizontal eye pupils, possibly an aid in spying enemies while grazing. . . . Reindeer milk is the richest of eleven different kinds of milk listed in the Federal Yearbook of Agriculture. . . . Red blood cells are manufactured in the human body at the rate of 30,000 a second. . . . Every second of the year, an average of about 16,000,000 tons of rain and snow fall on the surface of the Earth. . . .

Mountain-top lichens, it is estimated, live for 1,000 years. . . . Though they are the largest mammals in the world, whales are, in general, the most peaceful creatures that inhabit the sea. . . . A television machine manipulates 6,000,000 points of light a second to reproduce its pictures!

MORE SCIENTIFACTS IN THE NEXT ISSUE!

THE BLONDE, THE TIME MACHINE AND JOHNNY BELL

By KENNETH L. HARRISON

Johnny Set Out to Make His Fortune in the Future—but the Payoff Was Too Fast for Even a Time-Traveler!

AT least a dozen odd objects occupied the window of Pop Keller's hole-in-the-wall Curiosity Shop. There was that watch the size of a victrola record, for example. It could tell the time, indicate the weather, act as a compass, and serve as a perpetual calendar. It wasn't as complicated, though, as the huge Chinese typewriter, which looked like an organ.

Johnny Bell studied them in amusement. Shorty Smith's tip that Pop Keller's Curiosity Shop would make a novel feature article for the *Clarion* was a good one. That abacus in the corner of the window, with artificial eyes for beads, was unusual. And a picture of that jade-back-scratcher beside it wouldn't look bad in the paper, either.

But the strangest thing he had ever seen was the queer-looking mechanical apparatus in the center of the window. Johnny Bell's gray eyes narrowed in perplexity as he read the advertising card atop it:

TIME MACHINE
FOR SALE—CHEAP

Johnny Bell had seen enough. Striding forward purposefully, he crossed the shop's threshold. The place was open for business, but only an echelon of flies was busy. It was then that Johnny saw the blonde. She had hair like Betty Grable's, a figure that would

have won her a screen test any day.

Standing behind the counter, she was swatting *oomph-ily* at the flies with a swatter that had probably adorned Napoleon's bedroom. Simultaneously she was assorting a tray that held a couple of dozen watches.

"Hello," Johnny greeted her warmly. "What time is it?"

She looked over his lean six-feet, all-American frame, and must have liked his dimple. She smiled.

"I don't know. Why don't you dial Meridian Seven-one-two-one-two?"

Johnny Bell transferred the fly-swatter from the blonde's hand to his own.

"How'd you like to get your picture on the *Clarion's* woman's page, angel?" he said confidently.

The angel laughed. "Who, me? 'Miss Curiosity Shop. The Face That Broke a Thousand Clocks.'"

"Angel, you sure could kill time for me!" Johnny stated.

Footsteps behind him cut his line short.

"Don't look now," the blonde whispered, "but Methuselah's back from lunch. It's Pop Keller."

THE old man who just came into the shop did look like Methuselah, though his clothes were as startlingly out of date as Edgar Allen Poe's. His face was wrinkled and yellowed with age. His eyes were strange, fascinating, withdrawn sadly as if to a

A PRIZE-WINNING STORY IN



There was a queer-looking mechanical apparatus in the center of the window

remembered dream. Yet they were not old eyes. They were as young and vibrant as Johnny Bell's.

Johnny unwillingly deserted the blonde and introduced himself to the old man.

"I'm Johnny Bell, of the New York *Clarion*. I'd like to do a feature article on the peculiar objects here. There will be some swell free publicity for your Curiosity Shop, Mr. Keller," he ended meaningly.

"We don't want publicity," the old man said gruffly. "People come here and gape. They never buy."

Johnny persisted. Maybe if he bought something, he might get in the old man's good graces.

"That time machine you've got in the window," he said easily. "What is it—a clock? I'd like to buy it."

The old man exchanged glances with the blonde.

"I've only got two left. You couldn't

OUR CONTEST FOR AMATEURS

afford the price. Besides, it's slightly used."

The blonde interrupted. "Oh, give him a chance, Pop," she argued. "Tell him what it is. Maybe he'll buy it."

The old man frowned in thought, then nodded his head.

"Young man, I may not look it, but I was once Arden Michael Keller, Doctor of Philosophy, Science and Laws. That time machine you saw in the window is one of my own inventions. It's a subtle invention, a powerful one—and dangerous. Yes, it certainly is dangerous, especially in the wrong hands!"

He closed his eyes, and for an instant, Johnny Bell had a most peculiar sensation. He could have sworn that the old man was lost in memory, a far-away memory of another age, another time, another world! Then Keller opened his eyes.

"Young man, what I'm trying to say is this—would you really like to buy my invention? The time machine is a contrivance like a boat, a car or an airplane, except that it doesn't carry you over land or water or through the air. It transports you through time. You can go into the future or into the past at will!"

"You see," said the blonde, "what Pop means is, suppose you had a date with me. You came late, saying you had to work overtime at the office. But I could get into this time machine and go back and check up on you."

"So what?" asked Johnny, feeling for the fly-swatter and the blonde's fingers. What she had said about a date with him sounded more interesting.

"You can make a fortune," Keller stated. "Of course, you'd need a little investment."

"Fortune?" asked Johnny, playing along.

"Certainly. You want to get rich, don't you?"

"Why, sure. Who doesn't?"

"There you are. You want to be rich, a millionaire playboy." Keller glanced significantly at the blonde. "Very well, you shall be, and by the use of my time machine."

"Okay, how does your time thing

make me rich?"

"Young man," the old man said, "it's like this. You travel into the future on my time machine, go to the library and jot down the market variations from day to day. Then you return and play the stocks for all you're worth. With your knowledge on how the market will run, you can't possibly lose. You'll make a million almost overnight."

JOHNNY BELL rubbed his chin with pretended thoughtfulness.

"Yeah," he admitted. "It sounds all right."

"Of course!" The old doctor's voice broke, and for a moment he had to stop. At last he looked up, swallowing painfully. "My boy," he said, "because you remind me of myself when I was your age—and because I won't live much longer, anyway—I'm going to ask only five hundred dollars for my time machine. Just think, young man, five hundred dollars for a million! You can't lose."

"H-m," said Johnny, "five hundred dollars." . . . Apparently the blonde was a realist, for she cut in at this point.

"Just a minute, Pop. This proposition sounds good, but how does Johnny know it will work?"

"Yeah," said Johnny. "Maybe I'm being just another sucker."

The old man silently took off his heavy coat and laid it on a bench. He wore a curious, wide belt, studded with half a dozen knobs and two small battery cases at his sides.

"This belt is principled along the same line as my time machine," he explained. "But because it is so small, it will take me only a few minutes into the future. Now if I set the needle forward one minute—there—and push the switch—so—I'll travel. . . ."

A blue aura flickered over him. He wavered in the bright afternoon light and then absolutely disappeared!

Bewilderedly Johnny stumbled forward, feeling blindly on a level with his chest. His hand passed completely through the place where the old man had been.

"It isn't a trick, sister," he said baf-

fledly. "He's gone."

"Yes, indeed—right into the future," said the old man's voice.

Johnny gasped. Pop Keller was standing exactly where he had been a minute before. Johnny's hand had gone through his entire body, yet he was obviously unharmed.

"Hey!" exclaimed Johnny Bell. "Did you really—"

"Travel in time? Of course. Here, try it yourself. There's nothing to it."

The old man had the belt off in a jiffy and was fastening it around the

"Sure," he said. "Did I really disappear?"

When she nodded, Johnny grinned at her and the old man. There was a delightful sensation running through him. He felt refreshed, even a little cocky.

"Nothing to it!" he announced. "Simple as winking an eye."

"It will be just as easy," declared Pop Keller, "to make a fortune with my machine."

"Well, the idea's a world-beater," Johnny admitted. "You do better than get rich quick. You go into the fu-

Autobiography of a Prize-Winner

By KENNETH L. HARRISON

BORN twenty-three years ago in Klamath Falls, Oregon. Lived most of my life since then in another southern Oregon town, Ashland. Three months ago moved to Portland, and I don't know why I didn't think of it sooner. Have had two years of college.

When I was about eight years old and still cute, I sat out on the porch one night and looked at the full moon, wondering what kind of people lived on it and how soon would I see them. I decided then to be a scientist. A few years later a pudgy doctor looked me over and said: "Son, you've got a bad heart. If you take it easy, you might live." So, I've taken life very easy.

When I was fifteen somebody showed me some old copies of Wonder Stories, and a new science-fiction fan was born. I decided then to be a writer of fantasy. You can see the result in this issue: maybe I should never have seen those science-fiction magazines!

I'm five feet eleven of skin, bones and a pair of rimless glasses—so I ought to be good at writing fantasy. I'm an Independent—so that makes both the GOPs and Demos hate me. I'm still single—so I'm happy. I'm ambitious—so the girl in the next block had better watch out. I'd rather starve at writing than make a fortune at anything resembling work—so I'm starving. I intend to make a name for myself in the literary world—so I'm going to do it!

Seriously, though, I do hope you like my story! I'll appreciate your comments. Thanks for bearing with me. And I wish the same luck and good fortune I've had to every other amateur who enters THRILLING WONDER STORIES' Amateur Writer's Contest.

reporter's waist.

"B-but—" protested Johnny, looking anxiously at the blonde. She didn't object, so he steeled himself. "Okay, nobody can say Johnny Bell is afraid of anything. So long, Angel. See you in a couple of minutes."

He turned the switch. Blueness sprang up about him, obscuring his gaze. The old man and the girl vanished. He was conscious of nothing but a momentary tingling.

"**A**RE you all right?" asked a worried, feminine voice.

Johnny opened his eyes. The blonde was looking at him with fear in her lovely features.

ture, grab off the inside dope, come back to the present, and make your dough a minute after you left. Well, it's good, but there must be something—"

"Of course," said the old man, "I can probably find someone more interested."

Johnny thought hard while his fingers itched. He looked at the blonde. She looked at him. Then they both looked at Arden Michael Keller, Doctor of Philosophy, Science and Laws.

"Why not?" said Johnny Bell.

"You're right," the blonde said. "Why not?"

The old man pointed a shaky finger north, past the direction of the city.

"My other machine is over there, in a private cabin. I'll lock the store."

The cabin was barely five minutes away. It was small but staunchly built, and set in the center of a pine and laurel grove. They had taken a taxi, and Johnny had stopped at the bank for cash—all the cash he had, as a matter of fact.

A woodpecker was at work nearby, and the afternoon Sun singled out the cabin. The blonde exclaimed her delight. Her husky-voiced pleasure sent warm shivers chasing each other up and down Johnny's back. The old man unlocked the door and led the way in. Johnny followed closely, the blonde hanging onto his arm.

"Private property," he told Johnny. "No one has ever bothered to interfere with my coming here, and I doubt if it will ever happen. What do you think of the place?"

Johnny looked around. The entire inside of the cabin was covered with a dull metal, which he thought might be lead. At the center of the floor was the time machine, similar to the one in the window. There were a simple appearing instrument panel, a waist-high bank of batteries, a bed, chair, card table, and sink to complete the furnishings.

The old man showed him how to run the time machine, and gave him a slip of paper with the instructions on it in case he forgot.

"A child can operate it," he admitted. "I've set it already. All you have to do is pull the switch." He sighed, looking around fondly. "It's like my own child. You'll take good care of it, won't you?"

Johnny nodded, and counted out the five hundred dollars. He laughed nervously as he went to the door with them.

"Well, this is it. Wish me luck!"

The old man didn't say anything. He just stared at the ground as if he had found something interesting there. The blonde hesitated, then threw her arms around Johnny's neck and kissed him hard.

"G'by!" she whispered. Johnny thought he saw tears in her eyes. "G'by, Johnny Boy!"

"Hey, you'd think I wasn't coming back," he protested.

The blonde clung tighter, until the old man harumphed loudly. Then she pushed Johnny away. He closed the door and turned toward the matter of going into the future.

He was just about to pull the switch when he glanced at the instrument panel. He frowned. The time destination was set too far ahead, it seemed to him. Must be a mistake. He consulted the slip of paper, set the indicator for one month, then pulled the switch.

The lights glowed a brilliant blue. In a matter of seconds they faded out. He was on his way!

OUTSIDE the cabin, the blonde watched the door close behind Johnny Bell. Then she looked at the old man beside her. Watching him putting the roll of money into his billfold, her eyes narrowed.

"Okay, Grampa," she said. "He's on his way—into the future. You can relax now."

The old man put away his wallet and straightened his five-foot-six body into a good six feet with surprisingly little effort. The years shed from him as if they had never existed. His face was still yellowed, wrinkled and bearded, but his actions and voice were young and forceful. His vibrant eyes blazed intensely at the blonde.

"Listen, baby," he said dangerously, "I didn't like the way you looked at that guy. Lay off the heat. You don't have to fall all over them."

She looked him up and down in cold disdain.

"Nuts," she said. "You make me sick. How many guys do you think you could rope in without my touch, you broken-down scientist? Why, that guy was ready to spread our shop all over his newspaper. I had to play up to him, get him to buy the machine. If he gave us any publicity, our racket would be shot. And Johnny Bell was such a nice guy. . . ."

Anger smoldered in the young-old man's eyes. His hand cut a vicious circle through the air.

"Lay off that! And, listen"—his

tone lowered threateningly—"I'm warning you for the last time. Don't put so much in that farewell kiss!"

The blonde shrugged.

"Forget it." She glanced up at the sun. It was still high. "Well, come on, Grampa. Wipe the grease paint off your collar and let's get going. We've still got time for another sucker."

JOHNNY BELL stepped into the future, three thoughts biting into his brain.

First, the old man and the girl were gone. There was no trace of them. Second, when he had left, the Sun had been shining. Now, there was a light drizzle and the sky was overcast. Third, he felt a little sick in the stomach.

This merited consideration, and he put his hand to his chin in a typical gesture. He jumped. His face was covered with a half-inch beard—a month's growth.

"Well, I'll be damned! It really worked. The trip weakened me a little, but I'm in the future." He danced an idiotic jig, ending with a sorrowful splash in a mud puddle. But he paid no attention. "Wow!" he shouted. "The old guy was right. I'll make a fortune!"

It looked as if he would. Quickly he reached town, had a satisfying meal at Pete's Lunch and was in at Ray Gordon's barber-shop, getting a shave.

"I haven't seen you in quite awhile, Johnny," Ray said. "Been out in the woods?" The straight-edge slid across Johnny's cheek. It felt great to have a shave.

"Oh, I just been around, Ray."

"Mmmm. Take it easy. I don't want to nick you. Sideburns?"

"Nope. Got something big on the fire. Wish I could let you in on it."

"Hot towel? Not another gold mine!"

"Oh, no," Johnny stated, wincing. "This is the real thing. I was just lucky, getting in on it. Wait'll you see the limousine I'll be sporting in a few weeks. Boy, will she go for me then!"

Ray swung the chair upright.

"Oh, so there's a dame in it. Blonde

or redhead?"

"Platinum," said Johnny. He stopped when he saw a familiar figure walking past the window. He jumped out of the chair with a wild cry and grabbed his coat. "Hey, there she is now!"

"That'll be four-bits."

Johnny fished a dollar bill from his pocket.

"Keep the change," he called back.

The street was rather crowded. Quickly his eyes skimmed up the street. He saw her standing at the corner, waiting for the light.

"Hey!" he shouted, running toward her, dodging past indignant pedestrians. "Hey, wait up for me!"

Her head turned, and a startled look fled across her face. Then she hurried around the corner as if a thousand devils were after her. Johnny didn't miss the sudden whiteness of her face. When he got to the corner, she was out of sight.

"Now what'd she do that for?" he groaned. "She must have mistaken me for somebody else."

He let it go at that, but it remained on his mind.

In the library, he asked for the newspaper files for the past thirty days. It was tedious work going over the stock market reports. By singling out half a dozen stocks and sticking close to them, though, it took him only a couple of hours to realize that he could run a hundred dollars into a considerable fortune.

He grinned as he shoved the important slip of paper into his pocket. When he walked past the wizened librarian, he winked gayly at her.

"So long, toots. Give my regards to Shakespeare."

"Why—why—" she sputtered, "the man's crazy!"

BACK at the time machine cabin, Johnny prepared to return to his starting point. It seemed incredible that he was only a few minutes away from the blonde and the beginning of that million bucks. He felt the paper reverently in his pocket.

"Nice going, Johnny, old man," he gloated. "You're doing all right." He

frowned thoughtfully, then jerked the time indicator forward. "Hell, why not see what the end of the century brings? After all, I can always go back to the day I started out."

Once again the lights glowed, but a little longer this time. At last the blue radiance died. Johnny Bell hurried to the door. He swung it open onto the world of the future. . . .

Horrible nausea seized him. A crushing weight drove him down, with a screeching roar in his ears and an inferno of white light flaming across his stinging eyeballs. He crumpled to the ground, unconscious.

Johnny Bell woke in a square, white room that was sterile with the smell of antiseptic. Apparently the effects of this long trip had proved too much for him.

There was one tiny window. Hanging from the ceiling near the foot of his bed was an oval, silver screen. It was too dull to be a mirror. He wondered about it.

Finding the signal button on his pillow, he pushed it. That ought to bring a nurse or maid, somebody who could give him an idea of what was going on. But no one came. Instead, the screen glowed, and a smiling, intelligent face materialized.

"Yes?" it asked. As if it could see Johnny's startled countenance, a friendly recognizance spread over its features. "Oh, yes, Dr. Carewe's patient. Well, how are you feeling? Dr. Carewe will be pleased to hear that you've awakened so soon. He didn't expect your recovery until late tonight."

The voice paused. The eyes looked downward for a moment.

"You might like to know," it resumed, "that you were found in Marchley Woods, unconscious. You have come through remarkably. I'll send a nurse in. If you want anything, just ask her."

The voice died away and the face melted from the screen, leaving Johnny staring blankly. The nurse entered immediately. She was tall and red-headed, like Ann Sheridan. She looked to Johnny as if she'd be a lot of fun.

"Well, well!" She smiled warmly at him, popping a thermometer into his mouth. "So you've awakened at last. For a time, there, we didn't know what you were going to do. You can call me Rogers."

"Will I be here much longer?" he mumbled around the thermometer.

"A day or two," she said. "Maybe more, maybe less. Depends on you."

She was counting his pulse. He stared dreamily at her.

"I've got to get back." He looked at her appreciatively. "But I hate to leave you."

"Relatives?"

"No, my fortune."

SHE raised her eyebrows. "Oh? I didn't know you were rich. I really didn't even suspect it."

"I'm not yet, but as soon as I get out of here, I'll go back and make a million dollars." He snapped his fingers feebly. "Just like that."

"Oh, I see," she replied suspiciously.

"Yeah, I know it sounds crazy, but it's the truth. I will make a fortune—more than I can ever use!"

"Of course you will," she soothed.

She went to the door and turned off a pale amber light which had been bathing him from the ceiling.

"What was that?" he demanded.

"Forester radiation. You know, the ray you've heard a lot about lately. It's actinic, but we give it a color to direct its beam. It keeps a patient in a narcotic state, and heals at the same time. When the patient becomes well, the narcotic effect wears off and he wakes up. Like you did."

"Oh," said Johnny vaguely. "Then I must have been here quite awhile."

"Three weeks. You were pretty bad."

"I guess so." He thought of something. "What year is this?"

"Twenty thirty-one. But don't worry. This loss of memory is only a temporary effect of the Forester ray."

"You wouldn't guess it," he told her, grinning triumphantly, "and you might think I'm cracked to say it, but I'll tell you, anyhow."

"Yes?" she encouraged.

"I'm almost a hundred years old!"

She bent her red head toward him and tugged humorously at the beard lying over the sheet.

"With that beard," she laughed, "you could pass for a hundred and fifty, easy."

She left him then, reminding him to push the button for the supervisor if he wanted anything. But Johnny Bell didn't hear. He was trying to fight down his stomach.

The very moment the door closed after the nurse, he struggled erect in the bed to study his reflection in the mirror. Not so bad. A little gaunt, yes, but a few good meals and a shave would set him right.

A month went by. And the more Johnny thought about it, the more he regretted having to go back. The future here was swell. Good food, pleasant surroundings, and once he had shaved his beard, the redhead had indicated that he had a future—with her.

Why did he have to go back? Well, he still wanted to get rich, and there was the blonde. But the blonde faded into insignificance when he thought of the redhead. Well, he still had those market reports from his first trip into the future. He's go back to his own time, make his clean-up, then come back here.

JOHNNY made his way down the street, past towering buildings. Men swarmed by in creaseless pastel-shaded suits. Women sauntered in ankle-length skirts and bare midriffs. The roar of planes over his head was an irritating burr. He flagged a taxi.

"Marchley Woods and step on it."

The taxi scooted. Johnny Bell looked up through its glassite top at the brilliant blue sky. Now that he had determined to visit his own time, the idea fascinated him.

Back at the cabin, the driver refused to take his money.

"This ain't fifty years ago, mister," he said, noting Johnny's currency. "How do I know that ain't counterfeit?" Then his eyes popped. He grabbed into Johnny's hand. "Is that

a buffalo nickel? A real one?"

"Sure it is," Johnny said virtuously. "Go on, take it. Buy yourself a bottle of Pepsi-Cola." He held out the rest of the change. "Take all of it. I'll be getting more."

Almost reverently, the driver held onto the nickel.

"Okay, buddy, if that's the way you want it. Jupiter, givin' away a buffalo!"

He shoved the throttle to the floor and the cab shot off so fast that Johnny blinked dazedly. Then he made his way into the cabin and shut the door.

A few moments' work, and he had set the dials to go back. He pulled the switch and waited. But the time machine didn't work. Again he set the dials and pulled the switch. Again nothing happened. He wiped a nervous hand across his perspiring forehead as he checked the inside of the cabin for weathering. He checked the glass bulbs and the wiring, the batteries and the instrument panel. There was nothing wrong with them.

Johnny Bell sank on the bed and tried to think.

"There's something the matter with it, though. Something must be broken. It won't work. It won't..." He sat up, startled. "Maybe that's it! Maybe it only goes into the future!"

He set the dial ahead one hour, pulled the switch. Instantly the bulbs lighted. The room flooded with blueness. Swallowing dryly, he sat the dial back one hour. Again he pulled the switch for the supreme test.

It failed.

Johnny smiled wanly. He didn't move or change his expression for a good many minutes. Then he went out into the warm sunshine. He looked around at the trees and the outside of the cabin. Everything looked just about as it had the day the old man sold the time machine to him. He pulled out the slip of paper with its stock market quotations.

"Yeah, get rich quick, Johnny. It's fool-proof! Serves me right!" He laughed bitterly. His lips curled and his hand squeezed the paper harshly, as if he were throttling it. "The dirty skunk. I'd like to get my hands on

him for just five minutes! Sending me on a one-way ride! Five hundred bucks for a million, huh? Why, you dirty, damn—"

Suddenly his expression changed and he shook his head grimly. The whole thing was clear now.

POP KELLER had invented a time machine—that worked only one way. Experiments must have proved that return to the past was impossible. The idea of time-traveling was screwy, anyhow. The machine apparently put its operator into a state of suspended animation, keeping him ageless while time caught up with him. But the damned thing couldn't work in reverse. That explained something that had made Johnny Bell suspicious. Keller knew better than to use the machine himself to clean up on the market, so he had played the racket just for the selling price.

Something else was also clear to

Johnny now. The time destination had been set too far in the future. Sure, suckers weren't supposed to be sent a short distance in time, because they could come back to the shop and squawk. That was why the blonde had been so startled at seeing him again. He had changed the time destination himself.

Johnny Bell swore softly as he realized how neatly he had fallen for the blonde's bait. He must have had fall-guy written all over his face the minute she looked at him.

Johnny relented when he thought about the date. Somehow, it didn't seem right to hate the dead. If the blonde weren't dead now, she must have been in a sideshow.

"Well, it's not so bad, angel," Johnny said, grinning. "The future is a great place. I like it, and I think it's going to like me. Besides, I've practically got my redhead. Sorry, angel—it looks as if I actually have the last laugh!"

Highlights of the 1940 World Convention

THE 1940 World Science Fiction Convention went over—with a bang! More than one hundred of fantasy's fans, authors, artists, and editors, from every section of the country, assembled at the Hotel Chicagooan in Chicago to make this convention one of the most distinctive celebrations ever seen by fantasy fandom. The enthusiasm and camaraderie displayed by all is a splendid tribute to the intangible bond that links all devotees of science fiction literature together. You should have been there to participate!

The highlights of the Convention were many. Leading fans from every city introduced themselves to the assembly, met each other for the first time. Bok Tucker . . . Wm. Laurence Hamling . . . Mark Reinsberg . . . Erle Korshak . . . Robert W. Lowndes . . . Richard I. Mayer . . . Julius Unger . . . Donald A. Wollheim . . . Forrest J. Ackerman . . . Milton A. Rothman . . . Fred Shroyer . . . Bruce Yerke . . . Gertrude Kuslan . . . and scores of others. Some gave talks on their views regarding fantasy fiction, others quizzed the celebrities. Still others were active snapping candid shots of fans, star authors, etc. But they all had a good time.

Some of the nation's leading fantasy writers were there in person, to tell the s-f world how, why, and what they write. The Number 1 Science Fictioneer, Dr. Edward Elmer Smith, creator of the "Skylark" series, gave an excellent talk. Ralph Milne Farley, Eando Binder, Robert Moore Williams, J. J. Millard, Helen Weinbaum, Jerome Siegel, David Wright O'Brien, John Norman, and many others.

Famous fantasy fan Forrest J. Ackerman gave a scoop showing of the scientifilm, "Monsters of the Moon." A gala science fiction masquerade party was held, wherein guests portrayed various s-f characters. And a special banquet was given in honor of Dr. Edward Elmer Smith, a hearty testimonial to Dr. Smith's fifteen years of popularity.

We were represented there, too, along with editors of other fantasy magazines. It was great fun. And if *you* didn't participate, look forward to the next world convention!—THE EDITORS.

WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

By
RAY CUMMINGS

Author of "Zeoh-X," "Shadow-World," etc.

When the World Doesn't
Spin Fast Enough for Tubby,
the Amateur Scientist, He
Starts His Own Revolution!

THE big auditorium was hot and crowded. Wedged in his chair, Tubby, the amateur scientist, sat owl-eyed, staring at the platform. There, by means of several little gadgets, the lecturer was illustrating an intricate scientific problem.

"We all know what gravity is," the lecturer was saying. "But few people realize that gravity on Earth is affected by other forces. Centrifugal force, for instance. We live on the surface of a globe. A revolving globe because as we all know, the Earth is revolving on its axis."

"Sure," Tubby muttered to his companion, Jake Saunders. "I know that. But he said—"

"Shut up," Jake warned.

"The reason our bodies—houses—everything on Earth—do not fly off under the influence of centrifugal force," the lecturer went on, "is that Earth's gravity is a greater force. But now suppose that the Earth were to revolve on its axis much faster than it does. The centrifugal force would increase. When that force became greater than gravity—well, then, everything would fly off! We would have a world depopulated! Denuded of everything!"

"That ain't so," Tubby muttered.



The eyes of all the upside down little faces were glowing with a baleful, menacing look

But now the lecturer was illustrating his point. He had a little turn-table gadget that looked like the record turn-table of a phonograph.

He put a small white cardboard pill-box on it.

"That box is held there by gravity," he said. "Now I will slowly rotate the table."

The turn-table disc began to revolve slowly. The pill-box stayed in its place.

"That's the Earth and us on it," the lecturer said. "But now if the rotation is faster—"

The turn-table went faster. Presently the pill-box quivered and slid off.

"Tain't so," Tubby muttered. "Nothin' could make me slide off the Earth. I'm too heavy. That ain't right."

"But it is right!" a strange voice hissed in his ear. "It's right, and it's vital! It's illuminating. Oh, now I realize that it fits in exactly with all the terrible facts!"

A hand was gripping Tubby's fat shoulder—a long-fingered bony hand that shook with excitement. Tubby turned and stared into the face of the man behind him. It was a long, thin, bony face that looked like skin drawn over a skull.

The man's eyes were blazing.

"You said you were too heavy to slide off the Earth," he addressed Tubby. "How much do you weigh?"

"Me? Hun'erd an' ninety-two pounds," Tubby said proudly. "More maybe."

The cadaverous man gulped.

"You—you look it. Yes, you're a little safer than the rest of us, but not much."

"Safer?" Tubby gasped. "What's the matter? Any danger?"

"Danger?" the slender man behind him echoed. "Why, the world is menaced! You and me. Everything—everybody! The greatest danger that has ever threatened the world is upon us now! What he said—so illuminating—"

The man had slid from his seat. He stood in the dark aisle beside Tubby, a thin little man with long scraggly

white hair. He was trembling with excitement.

"You come with me," he pleaded. "Oh, please—I need you—the world needs you. Hurry! It's a crisis!"

LABORIOUSLY, Tubby climbed from his seat and followed the little man out of the auditorium.

"What's your name?" the little man demanded.

"Me? I'm Tubby."

"I'm Professor Newt. Professor Arthur A. Newt."

"Pleased to meet you, Perfessor."

The professor shook hands.

"Come on," he said. "We haven't a minute to waste."

"Where we goin'?" Tubby demanded as they hurried down the dark village street.

"To my laboratory. It's not far. Goodness, don't you feel it? It's getting worse!"

"What's getting worse?"

"The lightness. The terrible lightness. Everything losing weight. Don't you feel queer?"

Tubby expanded his chest. Come to think of it, he did feel queer. Sort of peppy as though it wouldn't be any trouble at all to run and jump. It was a pleasant feeling.

"Come on, Perfessor," he said. "Let's hurry."

The night was clear, with stars and a full moon. There was quite a breeze blowing. Suddenly something came sailing on the wind and smacked Tubby squarely in the face. He stooped and picked it up. It was a little rag doll. It felt very light, as though it was just cloth with no stuffing in it.

"Oh, my goodness," Professor Newt wailed. "It's beginning already. And look up there!"

Tubby saw other objects sailing in the air now.

"Look at the Moon," the Professor added. "And those stars—look how visibly they are moving."

Tubby saw it. The moon and all the stars were visibly shifting in the sky!

A radio was blaring in the Professor's dim, dusty and littered laboratory. A news commentator was giving

frightening news. People all over the world were getting panicky. Everything seemed to be getting lighter. Things were beginning to sail up into the air.

"The Earth's rotation on its axis is increasing in speed," the radio voice was exclaiming. "The days are getting shorter. The nights are getting shorter. Astronomers are terrified. If this cannot be checked, we'll all be hurled off the Earth! And what is causing it, nobody knows!"

"They don't know!" the Professor exclaimed witheringly. "You hear that, Tubby? But I know. Come here, I'll show you."

From the window Tubby and the Professor stared at the glittering night-sky, the stars and the moon crawling so surprisingly across it.

"You see that radiance, Tubby?"

Tubby saw it—a faint greenish glow of light-sheen like a huge sword slashing the sky.

"A new world has come into the Solar System," the Professor declared. "It's below the horizon just at this moment—you can't see it now. My giant electro-telescope discovered it quite some time ago. An inhabited world with strange diabolical beings on it. I've named it Xenenon."

The Professor's bony hands were again gripping Tubby.

"Xenenon is attacking us! That radiance—it's a repulsive ray, striking slantingly on the surface of the Earth—whipping our globe like you whip a top, so that every moment we are rotating faster!"

THE Professor's voice was a wail. "Centrifugal force is increasing. That makes gravity seem to be lessening. Don't you see the diabolical menace of it?"

"No—yes," Tubby gasped. "We'll all get too light and we'll slide off the Earth. Am I right?"

"Of course you're right! We'll be hurled off. And then, with us all gone, those damnable beings will take possession of our world. They're accelerating our rotation terribly tonight. Oh—look there! It's morning already."

The crawling, sinking full moon had already set in the west. Suddenly the eastern sky flushed, and the sun came up.

"That ain't just right," Tubby murmured. "It's only ten o'clock at night."

"True," the Professor agreed. "Ten o'clock at night, and tomorrow's sun is rising. You see how fast they've already got us going? And a constant acceleration—"

"But what we gonna do about it?" Tubby demanded. He swung toward the Professor. The violent movement made him stagger on his feet. He was feeling so light now that it made him dizzy. "Got to do somethin' about it, Perfessor. Am I right?"

"Of course you're right," Professor Newt had turned hurriedly away. Hastily, he was packing a big suitcase with clothes, food, and with water bottles. Then he lifted it all from the floor and put it on a table. It was a suitcase almost as big as himself, but he lifted it effortlessly.

"You see how light it is?" he wailed. "Oh, dear—"

"What's that for?" Tubby demanded.

"Our supplies. We've got to hurry—my space ship is on the roof."

"You got a space ship to go places?"

"Yes. It's a fast space ship. I was thinking—"

"We gotta go an' attack them beings on that other world," Tubby said promptly. "We gotta smash that ray that's doin' this to us. Am I right?"

"Yes. That was my idea. But I have no revolver—no weapons—"

"Don't need none," Tubby declared. He thumped his chest, and the blow spun him around surprisingly. "I ain't afraid of nothin' nor nobody," he asserted. "I'll tear them beings on that other world all to bits. Come on, Perfessor."

They rushed up the stairs with the big suitcase, climbed to the roof. Tubby felt so light and strong that it seemed as if a big jump would take him over the roof parapet without any trouble at all.

The sun was off in the west as they got to the roof. It was tomorrow's afternoon. Light objects were sailing in

the air. The wind—unnatural wind caused by the Earth's accelerated rotation, the Professor declared—was blowing things away with the fury of a tornado.

Tubby didn't waste much time. He shoved the diminutive Professor and his big suitcase up into the yawning doorway of the little space ship, then jumped in himself and slammed the door.

"Get goin,' Perfessor. We got no time to lose. Right?"

"Yes—yes, we must certainly hurry."

NIMBLY, the Professor jumped for the controls. The little turtle-backed, mud-colored space ship quivered and rose. It sailed like a great clay soup-plate up into the night-sky, where the sun of the day after tomorrow was now swiftly rising over the eastern horizon.

"You're sure this is Xenenon?" Tubby demanded an hour later. "Don't let's make no errors, Perfessor."

"Of course it's Xenenon. I don't make errors. I've calculated all the elements of its orbit. It came from outer space, on a hyperbola, into the Solar System. But now its orbit is becoming an ellipse—like the orbit of our Earth, with the sun at one of its foci. Its final distance from the sun will be a mean of only a hundred and eleven million miles. You see the diabolical meaning of that, Tubby? The inhabitants of Xenenon can make their orbit what they like!"

He paused, then went on.

"I have evidence now that their ray is repulsive, or attractive at will. They are using it to alter their planet's course among the stars. It's diabolical! They have made the elliptical orbit parallel to our Earth's now—and only about nineteen million miles away from us!"

Xenenon seemed a very simple looking world to have such complicated things connected with it. For an hour it had been just a brown spot in the sky. The Professor was rolling off more figures, but Tubby was used to that now and he didn't pay much attention. Through the bull's-eye win-

dow he stared at their approaching destination.

Xenenon was now a dirty round ball, hanging in the glittering black firmament ahead of them. But it was rapidly getting larger. As the space ship turned over, Xenenon presently was a great mass of tumbling cloud-vapors, like a muddy sea beneath them. And then they plunged into the clouds as the ship dropped rapidly downward.

"Don't forget to stop us," Tubby warned. "Ain't we fallin' pretty fast, Perfessor?"

"Yes—yes, I guess we are." The Professor looked a little alarmed. He became very busy with the huge collection of dials, levers and push buttons that took up all one side of the control room.

"I'll stop us—never fear," he muttered.

Tubby saw the clouds beneath the ship suddenly break away into daylight of a dull muddy glow. Off a little to one side the greenish radiance of the enemy's ray was shooting down. The ground of a weird landscape slanted crazily and got rapidly larger. Already it was horribly close. And now it appeared to be overhead, as though the space ship had rolled over.

"Hey, Perfessor!" Tubby yelled. "Watch out! Everything's goin' wrong!"

"I am—watching out—" He was running frantically from one control to another. Then the landscape hit the space ship with a crash that flung the Professor and Tubby to the floor.

"Well, we're here," Tubby said. "This is Xenenon, last stop. Am I right?"

They picked themselves up. The space ship had evidently landed hull down, and, fortunately, it wasn't smashed. Then in a minute they were out through the doorway, staring numbed at their first sight of the strange landscape.

At first Tubby could see nothing but a dirty blur, as though his eyes had slipped out of focus. Then the blur got clearer. Under his feet there was a dizzying expanse of emptiness, with dirty clouds far down! It made his head swim.

"Well, my goodness! What happened?" the Professor gasped, his eyes wild with excitement.

IT was like standing on nothingness. But Tubby could feel solid ground under his feet. The Professor was clinging to him as they took a step. And now Tubby saw that close over them, like a little ceiling just above their heads, there was a spread of solid, mud-colored surface that went off into a dim, blurred distance.

Things were hanging down from it. Things that looked like rocks, with a path between them. Further away, weird-shaped brown and purple buildings were hanging down—buildings with lights in their windows. And things were moving off there—living things like bugs crawling on a ceiling.

"Why—why—" the Professor said suddenly. "I understand it now. I thought this atmosphere here was queer when I examined it through my electro-micrographic-spectroscope a while ago. The light rays here won't travel horizontally through this atmosphere. They are bent upward—no, I mean downward—diffused by the cloud-vapors like a great prism so that they come back to us reversed!"

The Professor was overcome by the magnitude of his scientific discovery. His bony fingers plucked at Tubby's arm.

"Reversed!" he reiterated. "The image of everything is refracted through the prismatic atmosphere so that we see it in reverse!"

"You mean," Tubby said. "Everything looks upside down. Ain't I right?"

A world upside down! It was amazing. Momentous. And it was confusing at first; but presently, as they took a few steps and could feel the ground always solid under their feet even though it looked as though it were over their heads, they began to get used to it. The Professor was still mumbling with triumph over his analysis of the nature of this queer atmosphere, but Tubby cut him short.

"We ain't so interested in this Xenonon, Professor. You're forgettin' our Earth's in danger. Hey, look! Here's

one of them beings what's attackin' our Earth!"

From behind a rock-clump that hung down overhead, quite near them, a big crawling thing had appeared. Tubby and the Professor stared. It was a long, oblong thing, with a body like a great smooth caterpillar eight or ten feet in length. It had legs on top—short, crooked, jointed legs that scratched on the upside-down rock surface. Underneath, it had a row of bulging little heads—twelve of them, fastened to the community body on spindly necks.

The heads bobbed as it walked. Every head had a goggling face of glowing eyes and a round mouth. There was a brain under the eyes that expanded in and out as though the creature was thinking very hard.

"Easy!" Tubby whispered. "Stand still, Professor. It's our enemy. Right?"

"Yes, of course. Oh, my goodness—" The little Professor was chattering with terror, now that the crisis was at hand.

"We gotta gauge it," Tubby whispered. "We gotta see how dangerous it is. Can it talk?"

"Oh I—I don't know."

It had come almost to within twenty feet of them. Then, suddenly, it stopped. And the eyes of all the upside-down little faces were glowing with a baleful menacing look. It seemed as if it were getting its minds made up to spring! Now Tubby saw other beings like it. But the others were all further away, evidently more timid. This one here was the leader.

"We gotta capture it—him—them," Tubby whispered. And now he saw what was even more important. Upside down here, on the upside-down rocks, a big complicated looking apparatus was hanging downward. The ray-projector! The diabolical weapon that was wrecking the Earth! This multiple-headed leader had shut it off now, was waiting to see what the invaders from Earth were going to do.

"Oh, there it is," the Professor suddenly murmured. "But that monster is guarding it. If only—"

"We gotta capture that machine,"

Tubby responded. "Smash it—ain't I right?"

"I see its nature now," the Professor was murmuring to himself. With his absorption at the new scientific mechanical wonder, he seemed to have forgotten their multiple-headed enemy. "It's a ray that you can make either repulse or attract. It's—"

"Hey, look out!" Tubby warned.

THERE was no time to theorize on how the ray might work. The monster was suddenly coming forward!

"Oh, my goodness—"the Professor chattered.

"Hey, you—all you people—get back!" Tubby shouted at the monster. He thumped his chest and flailed his arms belligerently. The weird being stopped. All the twelve little faces looked startled.

"That got 'em!" Tubby whispered triumphantly to the frightened Professor. Then to the monster, he yelled: "Hey, you—what language do you speak? Can't any of you talk?"

"We all speak every language," two of the heads suddenly popped. And then all the heads said at once: "You go back to Earth or we'll kill you and you'll get killed there anyway."

It made Tubby wave his arms again. But though his fat fists were doubled, this time the enemy didn't look so startled. Little arms were waving from it now. All its guttural little voices were muttering—a weird hissing, muttering rumble. And now, a hundred feet or so behind it, several others like it had taken courage and were slowly advancing. And off in the distance, all the upside-down ground-ceiling seemed crawling with hundreds of others, advancing to the attack! Something had to be done at once!

Tubby gripped the Professor.

"Now listen," he whispered hurriedly, "I'll hold it off—an' you go smash that ray-projector—"

"S-smash it?" the Professor chattered. "Oh, my goodness, we don't want to smash it! Our Earth is rotating too fast. This is the only thing that can bring Earth's rotation back to normal! If we could only take this apparatus back to Earth—"

"All right," Tubby agreed. "You carry it to the ship while I hold it—him—them—off."

"B-but how are you going to do that?"

"Hypnotism!" Tubby whispered triumphantly. "I been studying hypnotism for years. I'll hynotize it—them, so them heads won't know you're stealin' their weapon."

"But—" the Professor gasped.

"You jus' watch me."

"But, oh, dear, we don't know how to work the apparatus," the Professor moaned.

"I'll make 'em tell me!" Tubby chuckled. "You wait until I get 'em under my influence. Then we can question 'em—"

"That's a community body," the Professor murmured, "with each head developed to govern separate spheres of influence of the body functions. One head for thinking, another for eating, and so on. That's a complex biological structure. Indeed it is. I'm not sure what hypnotism will—"

"But I'm an expert," Tubby declared. "You just watch me."

His hands making passes before him, Tubby slowly advanced upon the staring monster. For a moment the biological monstrosity stood seemingly fascinated as it clung on the overhead ground, with the row of its little palpitating heads hanging downward.

"You can't move," Tubby was intoning. "You're subject to my will."

The weird little faces all stared silently. Tubby took a few more steps, with his hands slowly waving.

"You're helpless," he intoned.

"Who is—I'm not—why should we be?" three of the twelve little voices popped abruptly.

"You are helpless," Tubby insisted. He made more passes with his hands. "You're all subject to my stronger will. Your minds are drifting, held in abeyance subject to the Master's control."

"Good work!" he heard the little Professor murmur encouragingly at his elbow. "Keep it up, Tubby. Put them to sleep."

"Shut up!" Tubby hissed under his breath. "You'll break the spell. An' I don't want to put 'em to sleep. Ain't

I gotta make 'em tell us how to work that ray-machine? . . . You can't move," he intoned impressively to his victim. "You are forced to do what I say—an' like it."

Tubby could see he was making progress. Every face, as he stared hypnotically into its weird triangle of green-glowing eyes, responded with a vacant helpless stare. But it was confusing, having them upside down. And it was hard—almost impossible—to stare at all twelve of them at once. Three of four, yes. But as soon as he had them properly hypnotized, when his dominating gaze moved on down the line, the first ones came to life, with little guttural muttering voices of rebellion.

AND the weird community body was acting strangely. Parts of it were quiet, hypnotized. But other parts were twitching, quivering, straining—as though some of it was trying to jump into action and the rest of it couldn't move!

"Oh, dear," Tubby heard the Professor murmuring. "That's what I was afraid of. It's a complicated organism—a biological monstrosity amazingly complex—"

"Sh-h-h!" Tubby hissed.

But the being did look as if it was liable to burst.

"Just relax," Tubby intoned soothingly. "You must answer now what I ask you. . . . What do I ask 'em, Professor?" he demanded in an undertone.

"There's a left-hand and a right-hand starting lever on the machine," the Professor prompted briskly. "One is obviously the repulsive ray, and the other is the attractive ray. Find out which is which."

Tubby nodded.

"You're completely under my control now," he told the creature. "It is necessary for you to speak the truth. You cannot do anything else. Now tell me which of them levers—the right-hand or the left-hand one—is the repulsive ray? Keep your mind on that," he added softly to the Professor. "Don't let's forget. I'm asking 'em—which is the repulsive ray."

For a minute there was a horrible

silence, with Tubby making steady passes at his gruesomely twitching victim. Then one of the little voices popped.

"The left-hand lever is for the repulsive ray."

"Swell!" Tubby chuckled. "Got 'em, Professor. Hear that? The left-hand lever is for the repulsive ray. Make it snappy now! Hurry it! Get that machine on board an' we'll get out of here!"

Tubby didn't dare take his gaze off the hypnotized victim. Out of the tails of his eyes he could see the little Professor struggling with the big machine, dragging it around past the helplessly hypnotized biological monster.

Tubby felt himself slipping. Could he hold his victim long enough? The hypnotized monster was twitching harder now, almost about to break the spell, lashing itself with awakening fury. And worse—much worse—on the ground overhead now, other multiple-headed beings were crawling forward—a whole army of them outraged by the subjection of their leader and the theft of their machine. A whole army—none of it hypnotized—coming rapidly to the attack!

"Hey! Hurry it, Professor!" Tubby desperately shouted. "I can't hypnotize no whole army!"

"I am—hurrying it. Oh, dear—I've almost got it in. Come on!"

Tubby turned and ran. The space ship was upside down, which was confusing. And it was worse to find Professor Newt struggling with the big machine stuck crosswise in the doorway!

The swarm of hissing, muttering monsters was almost upon them when at last the Professor and Tubby tumbled the machine into the ship and slammed the door against a line of hissing faces. Other monsters were climbing onto the turtle back of the ship outside. But the Professor jumped to the controls and, as the ship rose, one by one the scrambling monsters fell off.

"Did it!" Tubby exulted. "We got the world saved now, Professor. Ain't I right?"

IT WAS a return voyage of triumph. The workings of the ray-machine, now that the Professor had time to examine it carefully, were all perfectly simple. At each end it had a big starting lever. The left-hand one would turn on the pallid green repulsive radiance, streaming for millions of miles into space, shoving at anything it touched.

Jubilantly, the Professor and Tubby planned just what should be done. The Earth was undoubtedly spinning on its axis very fast now. It would have to be slowed down to normal.

"We'll work it like this," the Professor explained. "The Sun is the largest body close to the Earth. We'll set up our machine at night, somewhere in an open space on Earth—somewhere near the Equator would be best—and we'll wait until dawn. When the sun rises, at that moment on the rotating Earth-surface, we will be moving directly toward the Sun. You get the idea? We'll turn on the repulsive radiance—push a little at the Sun. That force will retard the axial rotation of the Earth a little. Then, the next morning, we'll slow it down a little more, until finally we get it back to normal. Get the idea?"

"No—yes," said Tubby. "You set up the machine, an' I'll pull the left-hand lever. We'll fix things swell for Earth. Ain't I right?"

It was lucky for the Earth that things had come out so nicely. The whole world needed help; there was no argument on that. Tubby could see as soon as the space ship drew closer how swiftly the Earth was now rotating. One minute the outlines of the Pacific Ocean were facing them; and in only a few minutes more, here was the Atlantic.

As they got down into the stratosphere, the chaos became still more apparent. The lower atmosphere was lashed with storm-winds; the oceans were a white churn. Worse than that—even out into space, things were streaming—blobs of things—human bodies—and great masses of wreckage, torn loose by the wind and flung off by centrifugal force.

"To become little satellites, forever

to revolve in their own newly determined orbits," the Professor murmured with awe. "Nature is so wonderful. Such a nice balancing of forces—"

"It don't look so nice to me," Tubby declared indignantly. "But we'll fix everything up swell. Just the way it was before them Xenenonites messed it up."

The Professor was clever. He got the space ship down through a dozen maelstroms and he landed without any crash on a flat desert of sand with the ship at the bottom of a big perpendicular cliff. Fortunately, there was no wind blowing here—a dead calm in the center of a dozen lashing storms.

It was night. The stars glittered in a moonless, cloudless sky. As Tubby and the Professor tugged the big ray-machine from the space ship and set it up with its back braced against the giant cliff-mountain, Tubby could feel how fearfully light everything had become. It was no trouble at all to carry the big machine in one hand. And as he walked he had to be careful; too violent a step would toss him up into the air.

They trained the big machine almost horizontally to the east.

"We gotta hurry if we want to catch this next sunrise," Tubby warned. "Make it snappy, Perfessor. Get them adjustments made quick."

The stars were crawling across the sky with amazing speed. In another minute or two the sun would rise.

TUBBY stood ready at the big left-hand lever.

"Okay, Perfessor?" he asked.

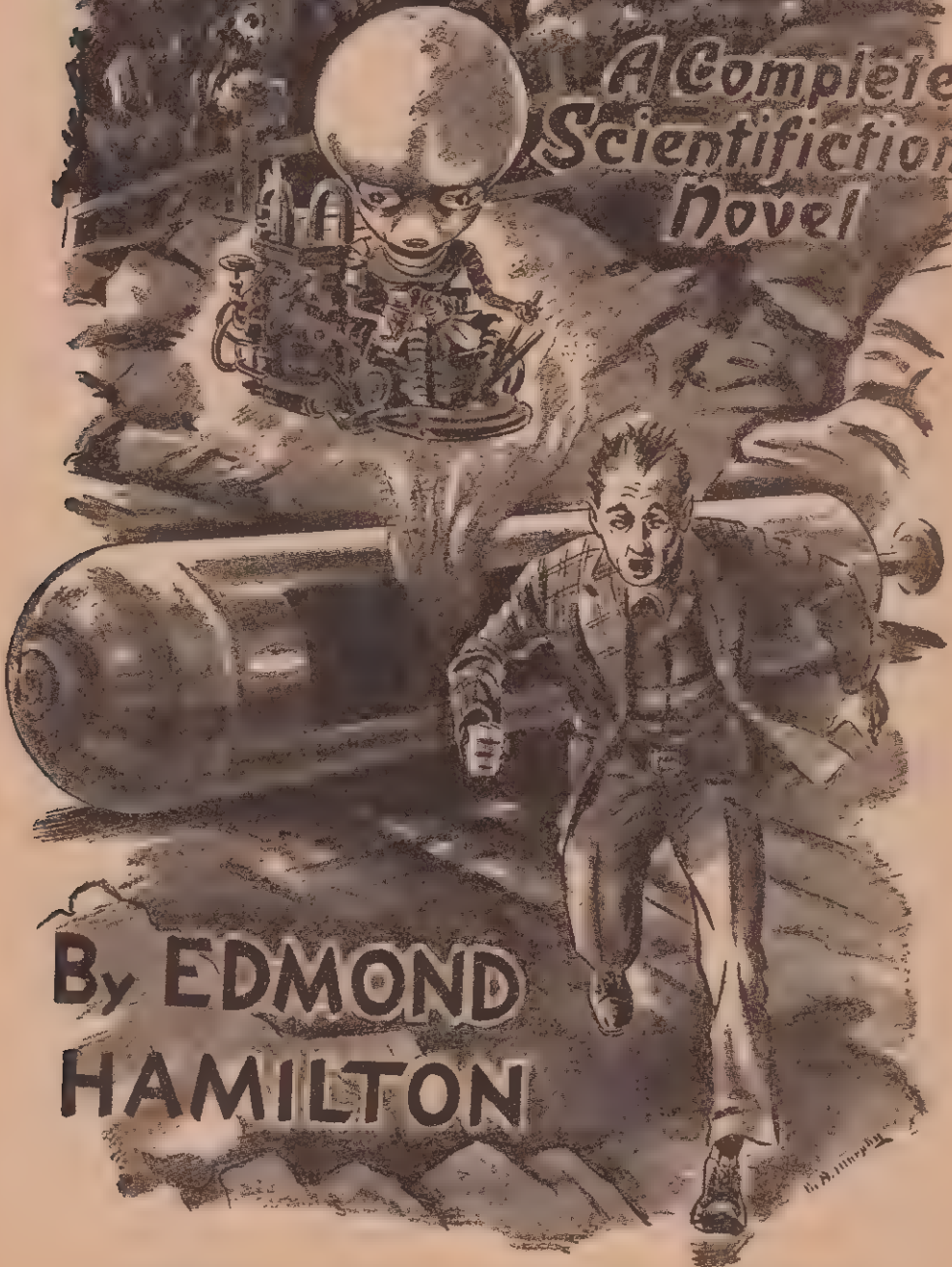
"Yes—yes, Tubby. As soon as the sun is fully up, give it a little repulsive force."

The left-hand lever for repulsive force. There was no mistake. But now Tubby suddenly remembered how the faces of that biological monstrosity had seemed to leer as one of the voices gave the answer. The answer had to be true—the monster was hypnotized and had to speak the truth. Then why that triumphant leer? Suddenly it dawned on Tubby.

(Concluded on page 118)

Gift from the Stars

*A Complete
Sciencefiction
Novel*



**By EDMOND
HAMILTON**

• COMPLETE SCIENCEFICTION NOVEL SECTION •

"Human Zero" Padgett Never Had the Nerve to Fight for His Rights— Till the Mighty Science of Vega Showed Him How to Change a Dec- imal Point of a Man to an Important Figure!



Walter Padgett

CHAPTER I

The Vegan

WALTER PADGETT punched the time-clock, took his weekly pay envelope from the cashier, and nerved himself.

"I will be masterful!" he breathed. "I will be dominating!"

Padgett didn't look dominating. A sandy-haired young man with friendly brown eyes, he was least impressive of all the clerks in this insurance office. Extra work was always shoved on him. Other clerks got promotions and raises, but his timidity with people, Padgett knew, would always hold him down. In desperation, he had been studying a course in will-power. Now he was going to test his new knowledge—drastically!

Padgett approached Brockway, the office manager. Brockway was a square, solid man who always watched his clerks with cold, suspicious eyes, just to make sure they didn't get too self-confident.

"I will be dominating!" Padgett repeated in a prayerful whisper.

For days, he had practiced the magic words from the book before his bedroom mirror. But somehow, he didn't feel so confident now as he had then.

"What's that you're mumbling, Padgett?" Brockway snapped.

Padgett tried desperately to remember the book's instructions.

"Mr. Brockway!" he began. But his voice came out, not loud and deep, but a high-pitched, ragged shout.

"What is it? What are you screeching at me for?"

Padgett tried vainly to remember the speech he'd memorized. "Been with the

company six years—only one raise—honestly think I deserve more money—" But the words just wouldn't come to his lips.

"N-nothing, Mr. Brockway. I—I was just saying good night."

"Good night!" snapped the manager.

Padgett slung out of the building, his shoulders sagging, his soul black with despair. He had failed miserably. His will-power was still a zero. Why hadn't he spoken out like a man? No book, he felt miserably, would teach him to dominate people. He'd been reared from boyhood by three old-maid aunts. That would make anybody just a timid shadow of a man.

DISPIRITEDLY he walked along Broadway. All about him he heard the loud voices of aggressive young men who would have stood up to Brockway and given him stare for stare. He thought dismally of Helen Gray. Probably he wouldn't even be able to induce her to spend tomorrow's holiday with him—

Helen Gray was the girl Padgett was hopelessly in love with. Hopelessly was the word, he knew. He got her on the telephone and hesitantly issued his hopeful invitation.

"Tomorrow's Sunday and I'm going up to Hudson Highlands for a hike in the woods. I don't suppose you'd want to come along?"

"I'm sorry, Walter. I've so many things to do tomorrow."

"But—but—" Padgett faltered. Then he said weakly: "All right, I'll call you next week."

He felt an even deeper despair as he hung up. He couldn't even persuade a girl to go with him for a holiday!

When he reached his room, Padgett's dull gaze fell on the will-power course. Bitterly

• A COMPLETE SCIENTIFICTION NOVEL •

he threw it into a corner. No book would ever help him.

Next morning, on the crowded train, Padgett watched with secret envy the boisterous people about him. He brooded in his corner seat, a shy young man whom nobody else even noticed.

Padgett felt relieved when he left the train. He sauntered along the rutted dirt roads that curved over wooded hills. The roads were damp and soft, for the night before there had been a heavy thunderstorm. But the morning was brilliant. Padgett felt better in this solitude, where there were no people around to make him aware of his inferiority.

At noon, he sat down near the roadside to eat his sandwiches. He noticed that the bank opposite him had been badly washed away by the storm. Then his wandering gaze fixed on something projecting from that slope.

Padgett stared wonderingly at the metal object that had been partly exposed by the sliding soil. It must have been buried for a long time. What was it?

HE laid down his sandwich and approached it. Perplexedly he examined the mud-smeared metal. It was bright and shiny where he scraped away the dirt, and it didn't look like any metal he'd ever seen. He rapped with his knuckles. There was a resonant echo, as though it were hollow. What was in it? Why had it been buried here, and how long had it been hidden before the landslide uncovered it?

Padgett began to get excited. Why, this was adventure—the kind of thing he had read about in books, but never actually encountered. There might be something valuable buried in it!

"Maybe gold, or jewels!" Padgett exclaimed. Then he shook his head. "No, I suppose it's just an old boiler. Still, it looks strange. . . ."

He began to kick at the dirt around it. The wet soil slid away in big chunks, uncovering part of a large cylinder. He sank to his ankles in mud as he worked, and perspired beneath the hot sun. No one came along. The old lane in the woods had not been used by any vehicle for years. Padgett was glad of that. He didn't want to share this adventure with anybody.

The half-exposed cylinder seemed to be about fifteen feet long. Padgett scratched more dirt from under it. With alarming suddenness, it came rolling down the bank. He leaped aside wildly, in time to keep from being hurt.

"Nearly crushed me!" he panted shakenly.

He was unnerved by his narrow escape as he stood looking at the thing he had unearthed. It was just a cylinder of dirt-smeared bright metal, with a strange plunger projecting from one end. Padgett rapped again on the metal, and tried to find a lock or way to open it. There was none.

"Must be just a queer piece of machinery, not worth anything," he thought. "But if it's hollow, it ought to open."

He twisted and pulled at the lever, but it was immovable. Then he thought to try pushing it inward. It budged a little. Pad-

gett pushed harder. By using all his strength, he was able to thrust the plunger a foot into the cylinder. But it would not go any farther, and there seemed to be no effect. He laid his ear to the cylinder. He heard a deep humming, from somewhere inside.

"Some kind of machine," Padgett marveled. "I must have started the works inside it, by pushing that thing—"

THE hum died away, and there was a space of silence. Then a startlingly loud, clashing sound came from within the metal shell. Padgett recoiled when he saw a door opening in its side.

First there was a thin slit in the metal. Then it widened until it was an aperture several feet across, like an eye. Padgett gaped. Suddenly his amazement gave way to horror.

A Thing was emerging from the cylinder. It was not a man, but neither was it an animal—at least, no animal Padgett had ever seen or heard of.

It was a head, mostly—a bulging, pink, semi-human head. The hairless skull was a great dome, and its face was tiny, with two round, huge, glowing eyes, no nose or ears, and a minute mouth. But it did have a ridiculously tiny body, just a little thing of baby-like arms and legs. It rested in a chairlike apparatus, to which were attached tubes, metal objects, and other mechanisms which Padgett could not fathom.

Most miraculous and unnerving of all, the Thing simply floated up out of the cylinder on its chair. Then it rested atop the cylinder and regarded Padgett with those great, glowing eyes.

"Good Lord!" Padgett choked.

With that strangled cry, he turned and started to run. He had not gone four steps before he suddenly stopped. He couldn't run any farther!



Arnold Wayne

Padgett found himself turning around and walking back toward the Thing. He shuddered with fear, struggled wildly to get away, but couldn't. His body seemed out of control, subject to another's will. His own was perfectly useless. Urged by that weird remote control, he marched till he was but two yards from the Thing.

"Do not be afraid," it told him in a high, shrill, babylike voice.

Padgett was more than afraid—he was terrified. But even in his terror, an amazing fact struck him. The Thing spoke in a totally unfamiliar language, yet he could understand!

"You receive my thought message, not the words I speak," the Thing said. "The power of psycho-control that makes you unable to control your own body."

PADGETT goggled. "You mean that you control my body—my own body?"

"Of course. My will, amplified and projected electrically, cuts out your own brain's commands in your nervous system. So you do what I will, not what you will yourself. But you have nothing to fear. You put me tremendously in your debt, by unearthing my star shell and operating its plunger. Had you not done so, I might have slept in it for more centuries in suspended animation."

Padgett was too stupefied now to feel terror. Also, the manner of the creature had been reassuring.

"You've been sleeping in that cylinder, buried in the Earth for centuries?" he gasped.

"For about four centuries, according to my uranium clocks. I would have slept many more, had you not awakened me. My star cruise would have been badly delayed."

Padgett did not understand. Apparently the weird creature saw his bewildered perplexity, for it explained.

"You see, I am a native of the largest world of the distant star you call Vega. Our race there is perhaps the greatest in scientific powers of any in the Universe. We have been able, by our science, to lengthen our life-span almost to immortality. We possess powers which, to primitive peoples like yours, would seem wholly magical. About eighty thousand years ago, I set forth in this star shell upon an extensive exploration of this part of the Galaxy.

"My shell travels at almost the speed of light. Even so, it takes many years to travel from one star to another. During that time, I sleep in the shell. When it lands on the world of its destination, the plunger is thrust back and starts the mechanisms which awake me from suspended animation. Then I established a base, make a scientific survey of that world, and go on to another star.

"But, as I now realize, my mechanism went wrong when I landed on this planet. Probably my shell landed in such fashion that the plunger was not operated. Due to this accident, I did not awaken. Shifting soil and sediment covered my shell and buried it for four centuries. During all that time, I have slept in complete unconsciousness. If you had not chanced to dig out my shell and operate the plunger, I would still be sleeping.

"I am grateful to you for that, and I intend to reward you. As I told you, we Vegans have vast scientific powers. I am going to give you any one of those powers you ask for."

"But I don't know anything about science," Padgett said hesitantly.

"That is not necessary," the Vegan declared. "Just tell me what power you'd like to have—whether it be invisibility, or bodily flight, or anything else within the limits of our mighty science. Whatever power you desire is yours for the asking!"

CHAPTER II

The Psycho-Power

PADGETT felt he must be dreaming. It couldn't be the timid clerk of Manhattan Insurance who stood here, talking to a monstrous creature from distant Vega.

"It is no dream," assured the Vegan. "I really can give you almost any power you ask for, as a reward for saving me from eternities of confinement."

Padgett continued staring idiotically.

"Well, what do you want?" the Vegan asked, its glowing eyes fixed expectantly on him.

"I—I don't know," Padgett stuttered. "My mind's so upset—I mean, I can hardly believe—"

"What power would you like most? Would you like to be invisible?"

"Invisible?" Padgett repeated incredulously. "Could you?"

"Of course. That involves only the transformation of the molecular structure of your body and clothing, to permit free passage of light. I will show you."

The Vegan put its tiny hand on a lamplike apparatus attached to its chair. A pale white fan of force sprang from the lamp and enveloped Padgett.

Rooted by bewilderment, Padgett felt nothing. But when he looked down at himself, he cried out. His arms and legs—his whole body—had disappeared! He raised a hand before his eyes, knew it shook though he could not see it. He felt his body. It was real and solid as ever. But he could look right through it.

"Why, I'm invisible!" he exclaimed hoarsely.

"All light now passes through you unchecked, except for microscopic nerve-ends in your retina which I left unchanged, so that you would be able to see."

Padgett walked a few steps, trying to grasp the reality of it. It was uncanny to see footprints appearing magically in the soft dirt. He could walk right through New York's streets like a ghost. The thought excited him. What would they say at the office—what Helen would say—when they saw him—

But they wouldn't be able to see him! That thought drove home through Padgett's excitement. Helen would not want anything to do with him. He'd be a mere phantom, a living wraith.

"No," he said in sudden panic. "I don't want to be invisible. Please change me back."

"If you wish," the Vegan said.

Another fan of white force leaped from the bulbous lamp. Looking down at himself, Padgett drew a great breath of relief as he saw his body appearing again.

"If invisibility isn't what you want, how about the power of flight?"

STILL trembling from the uncanny experience of invisibility, Padgett didn't understand.

"But I've been in an airplane. I took a sightseeing flight last summer."

The Vegan's shrill voice was full of lofty contempt.

"I do not mean riding in crude air-vehicles, when I say flight. We Vegans fly by magnetic levitation, making use of the phenomenon of magnetic attraction and repulsion, through control of polarity."

Padgett didn't understand, and said so. Next moment he regretted it. The Vegan floated in its chair toward him and fastened a wide, shining metal belt around his waist. Wristlets of similar metal went around his wrists.

"You can fly now, as I can," the Vegan stated. "Simply raise your arms above your head, and the magnetic polarity of your body will be reversed. Earth will repel instead of attract you. Lowering your hands will reverse the process. Putting your hands before you will carry you forward along the magnetic lines of force."

Padgett looked doubtfully at the belt and wristlets. Experimentally he flung his arms above his head. Next moment he was gasping for breath, soaring up with inconceivable velocity, the wind roaring in his ears like screeching fiends. He looked down wildly and saw the forest a thousand feet below him.

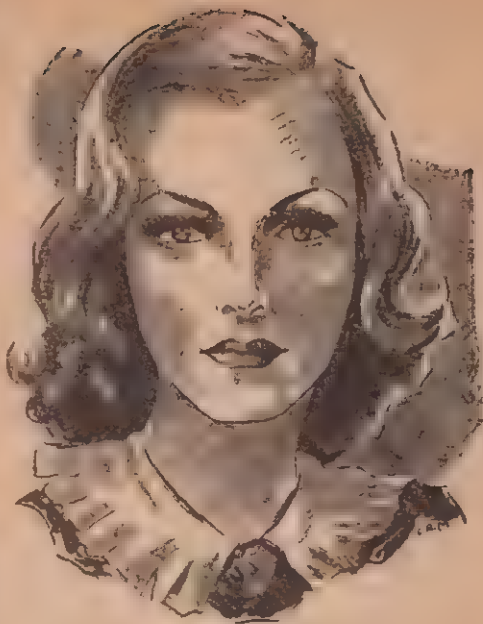
He gasped, the wind hammering into his throat, blinding him. Convulsively he lowered his upstretched arms, and instantly he was falling toward the green forest. He yelled in terror. He could see the green canopy of foliage rushing up toward him. Into his dazed mind leaped the Vegan's instructions. He jerked his arms upward at the last moment.

Whoosh! He was zipping straight up again. Again he let his arms fall, and again he was falling precipitately.

Then Padgett managed to get his arms in front of him. At once, he found himself skimming forward at nightmare speed a thousand feet above the forest. He was like a human projectile, until he experimented. By curving his hands like a diver, he could turn. The farther he kept them in front of him, the faster he flew. By bringing his hands back toward his shoulders, he reduced speed.

Padgett spied the old lane through the woods, the mud-covered cylinder and the Vegan in its chair. Frantically he tried to land there, but he maneuvered clumsily. Twice he misjudged and overshot it and had to rocket around and try again.

BUT he finally came to a wobbly landing in the lane near the Vegan's cylinder. He collapsed to the ground, keeping his wrists down in wild fear of being



Helen Gray

shot into the sky again.

"Take this thing off me!" he pleaded.

The Vegan floated toward him, and with its tiny, babylike hands quickly removed the belt and wristlets. Then it contemplated the shaking Padgett puzzledly.

"You don't want the power of flight, either?"

"No—I don't want it," croaked Padgett, breathing in great gasps. He stood up shakily. "What good would it do me? Everyone would think I was just a freak. There'd be nothing I could do with it except join a sideshow, and I'd always be afraid of shooting clear off the Earth."

"Well, what do you want?" the Vegan demanded a little impatiently. "I want to reward you, but nothing I have seems to appeal to you. How about enabling you to see through all walls?" Or would you like the power of living underwater?"

Padgett shook his head. "I don't want any of those. But there is one power you can give me that I'd rather have than anything else."

"If I can do it—and there are few things I can't do—just name it."

Padgett had had a little time to recover from the shock of his experience so far, and he had realized that this strange creature really could do what it said. His mind was soaring with excitement. There was something he wanted far more than invisibility, or flight, or any other of the alluring gifts the Vegan offered him.

"Give me the power to dominate other people! You see, I can't impress them. They always just ignore me. I'm completely at a loss trying to deal with them. My friends—even the girl I love—all sort of like me, but they don't really know when I'm around. If I could just be able to dominate people, I'd really be somebody. Can you

give me that power?"

The Vegan's glowing eyes looked a little troubled.

"I could give you that power," it replied. "But are you sure you want it? That power is a tremendous one. It might be more than you could control. I would be rewarding you poorly if I gave you something that got you into trouble because you could not handle it."

"I COULD handle it, all right," Padgett asserted eagerly. "How could I get into any trouble? Why, I'd be more powerful than any dictator or king! There'd be nobody that would dare to think I was just a rabbit of a man."

"I am afraid you do not understand all the potentialities of what you request," the Vegan stated. "Still, I have promised to reward you with any power you asked for. If you insist, I shall give you this. Are you sure you want it?"

"I'll say I'm sure!" Padgett cried enthusiastically.

"Very well," sighed the Vegan. "It will require a little time, and first you must be unconscious."

At the word "unconscious," Padgett seemed to see the Vegan's glowing eyes expand enormously. A wave of blackness rolled over him.

Padgett awoke slowly. He was stretched out on the ground beside the star shell. The Vegan, who had been bending over him, was now putting a number of strange little instruments back into a locker in the arm of his queer chair.

Weakly Padgett got to his feet. He felt oddly dizzy and dazed, and had to hold on to the side of the big cylinder.

"Did—did you do it?" he mumbled.

"Yes, it is done," the Vegan replied. "It involved a brain operation that none of your scientists could ever hope to achieve."

"You mean that you operated on my brain?" Padgett cried in dismay.

He put his hand to his head. It seemed the same as always. There was no sign of a scar on his scalp.

"Don't worry, there will be no ill effects," the Vegan assured him. "We Vegans can open the skull and separate the tissues by clean molecular cleavage. When the molecules close, they do not leave the slightest cicatrice. I have implanted deep in your skull a tiny electro-magnetic amplifier and projector. It is contained in a metal capsule less than a half-inch long, yet its powers are enormous. Its purpose is to amplify and project in a beam your thought-commands. Each Vegan has one imbedded in the skull.

"You see, thought is an electrical current. When you think or will anything strongly, from now on, the electric thought-current in your brain will be tremendously amplified by the tiny mechanism in your skull. It will be projected before you in a high-powered psycho-beam. Impinging on the brain of anyone else, it will set up in the other person's brain an induced electric thought-current so powerful as to dominate the subject's own thought-currents.

"Thus the subject will mechanically obey

your projected thought-commands. But the subject will obey, of course, only as long as your invisible psycho-beam impinges on his brain. That means you must keep facing him at a reasonably short distance to keep him subject to your psycho-control."

PADGETT's imagination kindled with the incredible idea.

"And it'll really work? I can really make anybody do just what I want him to?"

"You can," promised the Vegan. "I've given you the power you asked for, but you cannot get rid of this psycho-power. No ordinary surgeon could remove the tiny projector from your skull without killing you."

"I'll never want to get rid of it, don't fear!" Padgett retorted.

"I wonder," said the Vegan thoughtfully.

"I may have given you an evil reward for the help you afforded me. However, it was what you wanted." It started floating back toward the cylinder. "It is time I began establishing a base on this world, from which to conduct my surveys."

"Will you be staying long here on Earth?" Padgett asked awedly.

"I doubt if there is anything to detain me long. This appears to be a perfectly ordinary fourth-rate world of Type K. It should take me but a short time to carry out a complete scientific survey of so small and uninteresting a planet."

The Vegan, in its little chair, floated down into the cylinder. The door closed, like an eye shutting, and again its metal side was unbroken and seamless. Padgett heard mechanisms humming inside the cylinder. He stepped back hastily.

With a ripping sound, the shell was suddenly gone, flashing up into the sky, so fast that his eyes could hardly follow it. Then he lowered his gaze and looked dazedly around him. There was nothing but the sunlit woods, drowsing in the noonday heat, with buzzing insects droning sleepily.

"Gee, did I dream it all?" Padgett wondered. "Could it have been real?"

His eyes fell on the depression left by the cylinder in the soft brown dirt. That, at least, was real. He felt his head again. There was no sign of a scar.

"If it wasn't a dream," he muttered, his heart beating fast, "then I can dominate people with my psycho-power!"

Rapidly he started back along the lane to the highway. He must find somebody and try out the psycho-control.

"If it works, I'll be the most powerful man that ever lived!" he mused, almost frightened. "Why, there won't be anybody that can disobey me when I tell him to do something."

BUT Padgett began to feel as though the whole thing had been a crazy dream. Everything about him looked so normal that it seemed utterly impossible. The Vegan and his strange powers could never have existed. . . .

By the time he reached the edge of the concrete highway, Padgett had nearly persuaded himself that a touch of sun had made him imagine the whole experience.

But still he clung to the faint hope that maybe it had happened—maybe he did have the psycho-power. An automobile was coming along the road, traveling at high speed.

"I'll try it out on the driver," Padgett whispered breathlessly. "If it works, I'll know that everything really happened."

He remembered the Vegan's instructions. To make a subject obey his thought-commands, he must face him so the invisible psycho-beam from inside his skull would strike him.

He faced the oncoming car, now only a thousand feet away. He put all his will-power into a single thought.

"Stop!" he thought. "You, driving that car—stop and pick me up!"

Nothing happened. The car continued to hum toward him. Padgett felt a sick disappointment. So it had been just a crazy dream, after all. Then, a hundred feet away from him, the blue sedan suddenly skidded to a stop.

CHAPTER III

Mental Mastery

FOR a moment, Padgett was stupefied. He had not really expected the psycho-power to work, and at first it hadn't. Only when the car was a hundred feet away had it stopped. Did that mean the psycho-beam would not operate at more than a hundred feet?

"Maybe it didn't really work at all," Padgett muttered. "Maybe that driver meant to pick me up, anyhow."

He approached the car. The driver, a stout, red-faced man, was looking around bewilderedly, as though puzzled. Padgett faced him and hurled a new thought-command.

"Ask me to ride with you."

The ruddy features seemed to stiffen.

"Hop in, young feller!" the driver said loudly.

It worked! His psycho-power was real! He could make anybody obey his commands! He felt a terrific sense of new power. He was going to be a timid nobody no longer. He'd be the most masterful, dominating personality the world had ever seen.

Padgett climbed exultantly into the seat beside the driver. He couldn't wait till he got back to New York and put his psycho-power to use. Wait till he met Brockway and Helen! The red-faced driver had started the car again. But now he stopped, looked angrily at Padgett.

"What are you doing in my car?" he demanded.

"Why, you stopped and invited me to ride with you," Padgett explained.

"Did I?" said the red-faced man uncertainly. "I must have been day-dreaming for a minute. I never pick up hitch-hikers. You'll have to get out."

Padgett was flabbergasted until he realized what had happened. The moment he had turned his thought-command beam away from the driver, the man had reverted to normal. Hastily Padgett faced the driver

and hurled a quick thought at him.

"You don't want me to get out. You want to take me to New York."

"Stay in the car, pal," the red-faced man said loudly. "I'll take you right into New York."

Padgett breathed a sigh of relief. Again he turned his head, and at once came the driver's voice, more puzzled and angry than ever.

"Say, didn't I tell you to get out?"

PADGETT'S heart sank. He began to understand the limitations of his new power. He could make the driver do anything he willed, so long as he faced the man and kept him controlled by the psycho-beam. But the moment he turned away, the man was out of his control.

Padgett sought desperately for an expedient. He couldn't ride all the way to New York, looking at the driver to keep him under control. Abruptly he got an idea. He hurled a new command at the driver.

"Get in the back seat, bud," the man invited genially. "You'll ride more comfortably back there."

Padgett hastily climbed into the rear seat of the sedan, where he could keep the driver under psycho-control constantly. He gave the thought-order to start, and soon they were howling along the highway toward New York.

As they sped south along the Hudson, Padgett's confidence reasserted itself. It would not take long to learn all the tricks of using his new power. Wait till he faced Helen Gray!

He experimented on the driver, ordered him to drive faster. They leaped forward at once. A thought-order to drive more slowly was instantly obeyed. Padgett willed the man to sing "Annie Laurie," and the red-faced man threw back his head and sang in a loud, rusty voice.

Padgett felt a sense of power such as no man had ever felt before. Once or twice, before they reached New York, he looked aside. Each time, he noticed that the driver started to come back to normal. Padgett hastily turned toward the man again and brought him back under control.

They rolled across the George Washington Bridge through the brilliant sunset. Padgett willed the man to drive down to Central Park West where Helen's apartment was. Obedient to his thought-orders, the red-faced man drew up in front of the apartment building.

Padgett got out. Grinning, he called back to the driver.

"Thanks for the lift."

"How the devil did I get in New York?" the driver bellowed. "I was going to Jersey City!"

Padgett chuckled as he entered the apartment building. That man would be forever mystified by his sudden aberration.

WITH a new jaunty poise to his thin shoulders, Padgett rode up three floors and knocked loudly at the door of Helen's apartment.

Helen Gray opened the door, and her lovely brown eyes widened in surprise at

seeing him. She was dressed in a summery white frock, with a small white hat perched on her smooth black hair. Her pretty face showed her astonishment as Padgett calmly strode in.

"Why, Walter, I told you I couldn't see you today," she protested.

"That's all right," Padgett replied coolly. "Hello, Fessler."

Frank Fessler, an overpoweringly big and blond young man in a crisp white suit, had risen to his feet as Padgett entered. If there was one person Padgett disliked, it was Fessler. It wasn't only that Fessler was his rival for Helen's favor. He had a deep-rooted envy of Fessler's aggressive personality.

"Sorry, old man," Fessler said in his easy, self-confident way. "Helen and I are going out dancing."

"You shouldn't have come when I told you not to," Helen added, trying to soften the blow.

Padgett pretended disappointment, but his mind was seething. How should he use his psycho-power to dispose of his rival? Should he make Fessler do something ridiculous? Suddenly he thought of the very thing. Looking at Fessler, he hurled a powerful psycho-beam command.

"You think Helen's clothes look terrible," Padgett thought intensely.

Fessler's smile faded. He turned a little blankly and looked the girl up and down. He shook his head worriedly.

"I'm afraid you'll have to change that dress and hat, Helen," he said. "You can't go out with me, looking like that."

Helen's brown eyes widened. Her lips parted in sheer surprise as crimson flushed her cheeks.

"Just what is the matter with my hat and dress, Frank?" she asked with dangerous sweetness.

"They just look wrong," Fessler stated, frowning in disapproval. "What the devil made you buy such a dowdy outfit?"

"Dowdy?" cried Helen.

Padgett gleefully hurled a new psycho-command at Fessler.

"As a matter of fact, Helen," the big, blond young man went on severely, "I've been meaning to speak to you for some time about your clothes. I've been embarrassed, going around with you. Where do you get those fantastic get-ups?"

HELEN exploded. Her small figure was rigid with suppressed passion as she pointed to the door.

"If you're so ashamed of me, you needn't go out with me! You can go alone—and please don't ever come back!"

Padgett, looking innocently at the ceiling, chuckled inwardly at his triumph. Now that Fessler was released from Padgett's psycho-control, he looked as stunned as though he had been hit with a pile-driver.

"Why—why, I don't know what made me say that, Helen," he gasped. "I must have been out of my mind—"

"Don't try to apologize now!" Helen retorted. "If you don't leave, I'll have you thrown out."

Fessler, dazed and bewildered, let her

push him toward the door. Helen slammed it shut, then burst into a shower of tears.

"He said I looked—*dowdy!*" she sobbed.

Padgett shrugged virtuously. "I always thought Frank Fessler was a skunk, and now he's proved it. Forget about him, Helen, and come out with me."

"I don't want to go anywhere with anybody," Helen answered tearfully. "Please go, Walter."

Padgett knew that ordinarily he would have picked up his hat and obediently departed. But that was the old Padgett, the human zero. Now things were different.

He faced Helen and gave his mental order.

"You want to go with me," he thought intently. Aloud, he said gruffly: "You'll come, and like it."

The results were immediate. Helen stopped sobbing. With eager excitement in her beautiful eyes, she grabbed Padgett's arm and started for the door.

"Come on, Walter! Why are we waiting?"

But by the time they reached the street, Helen had recovered from his psycho-order. She was badly puzzled. She stared at Padgett with a dawning wonder, as though seeing him for the first time.

"Why, Walter, I never knew you to be like that before—so dominating."

Padgett glowed. He handed Helen into the taxicab with a new jauntiness.

"Silver Club," he ordered casually.

"Silver Club?" echoed Helen as the taxi started to roll south. "We can't go there. It's the most exclusive and expensive night club in town. We aren't dressed for it, either."

"We'll get in," Padgett assured her.

Helen stared at him, her wonder making her completely forget Fessler. But Padgett himself had a moment of chilling doubt. He had less than four dollars in his pocket. What would he do in the night club if his psycho-power happened to fail? He prayed it wouldn't.

WHEN their cab drew up before the impressive portals, a magnificently uniformed doorman sprang forward to open the door for them. But his eyes became hard as he witheringly eyed Padgett's muddy shoes and unpressed tweed suit.

"I'm afraid—" he started to say icily.

Padgett thought a quick order.

"I'm Padgett. You know me and you're glad to let me in."

The doorman suddenly smiled at him.

"Why, hello, Mr. Padgett," he cried effusively. "Glad to see you again. This way."

Helen looked dazed as she accompanied Padgett into the foyer.

"Why, he knew you!" she exclaimed wonderingly. "You've been here before?"

"Oh, I get around a little, now and then," Padgett said nonchalantly.

He could hear the doorman, outside, audibly wondering whether the heat had driven him nuts. They had paused in the softly carpeted foyer of the big, silver-walled club. Around a dance floor the size of a stamp were crowded tables, at which ladies and gentlemen in formal dress chatted against a

background of gay music. Padgett looked around appreciatively. He liked this place.

The headwaiter had noticed them, and had sized up Padgett in one swift glance. He approached to give them a polite and quiet bum's rush. Padgett pointed to an empty table at the edge of the small dance floor.

"I want that table there," he said loudly.

"Sorry, sir, but that table is reserved. And I'm afraid I must ask you and the lady to—"

He stopped. Padgett had faced him and was turning on the power.

"Why, of course you can have that table, Mr. Padgett," he said eagerly. "This way, please."

CHAPTER IV

High Pressure Love

THE smart patrons of the Silver Club looked up in astonishment at the drab young clerk and his pretty companion being escorted to the choicest table in the place.

Padgett sat down. Inwardly he was scared of his own temerity. He quailed beneath the curious stare of the people at neighboring tables, but he knew that he had already impressed Helen.

"Walter, we're so out of place here," she whispered unasily. "Everyone's looking at us. That stout woman with all the diamonds just sneered at me."

"She did, did she?" Padgett said vindictively.

He turned to look at the fish-eyed, overweight dowager. Immediately that lady did something that for the rest of her life would make her doubt her sanity. She hurled her plate to the floor.

"Hell, that soup is lousy!" she bawled.

The commotion aroused by this phenomenon took their attention away from Padgett and Helen. With a grandiloquent air, he ordered a waiter to bring them champagne.

"But how can you afford all this?" Helen asked incredulously.

Padgett now had exactly two dollars and ninety cents in his pocket. But he smiled in a superior fashion.

"Don't worry about that, Helen."

The head-waiter, meanwhile, was staring bewilderedly at Padgett from the edge of the room.

"I can't understand it," he was babbling to one of his men. "I gave that young hick and his girl the table reserved for Arnold Wayne! I must have gone crazy!"

"Arnold Wayne! Boy, will he be sore—and you know what Wayne can do when he's mad, Etienne."

Padgett was watching the floor-show, and enjoying himself tremendously. Every moment he was gaining more confidence in the immense potentialities of his power. A hand agitatedly tapped his shoulder. He looked up. It was the head-waiter, and behind him was a party of two men and two women.

"There's been a mistake, sir," the head-waiter gabbled. "This table was reserved for Mr. Arnold Wayne's party."

Padgett had heard of Arnold Wayne. Everybody had, for Wayne was one of the brightest luminaries of café society, a

wealthy promoter whose name was a talisman of influence on Broadway. There was a look of humorous surprise on Wayne's face as he surveyed Padgett and Helen. He was a dark, handsome man of forty, yet looked like a younger brother.

"Sorry to oust you," he said smilingly. "But we did reserve the table, and—"

He stopped. Realizing that he had to do something, Padgett had turned to face Wayne and had given him the psycho-beam power. In obedience to Padgett's thought-command, Wayne suddenly thrust out his hand.

"Why, it's Walter Padgett!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "Padgett, old man, it's good to see you again. Where have you been keeping yourself?"

THE head-waiter sighed in relief, and ordered more chairs brought to the table. Wayne gestured his friends to approach.

"Brower, girls, I want you to meet one of the best friends I ever had," he cried warmly. "His name is Walter Padgett."

Brower, a chubby, bald little man with suspicious eyes, looked surprised but shook Padgett's hand. The two luscious ladies in slinky evening gowns murmured their delight at meeting Mr. Padgett. Padgett, though, was at a disadvantage. He had to keep facing Wayne to hold him under psycho-control.

Padgett saw from the corner of his eye that Helen had been watching with undisguised amazement. He knew he was impressing her vastly tonight, and he glowed at that thought despite his fear.

"Any friend of Padgett's is a friend of mine, Miss Gray," Wayne said, when Padgett made the introductions.

Brower looked puzzledly at them.

"When did you and Mr. Padgett meet, Arnold?" he asked.

Wayne laughed. "Oh, that was a long time ago. We've had a lot of swell times together, haven't we, Padgett, old boy?"

"We sure have," Padgett declared, with a nonchalant smile.

"Walter, you never told me you knew Arnold Wayne!" Helen whispered in awe.

"Oh, I didn't think it was worth mentioning," Padgett said casually.

Champagne and talk flowed. Padgett became desperately worried, for he'd had to sit facing Wayne, putting thoughts and words into his mind. He hadn't dared to relax his psycho-control of Wayne for an instant. But he couldn't sit there all night. As soon as he would get up to leave, Arnold Wayne would be released from psycho-control. How in the world, Padgett wondered frantically, was he to get out of this predicament?

Padgett decided he'd have to take a chance of being able to get out now.

"Helen and I are going to run along," he said, much too loudly. "But the check for this little party is on me, Arnold."

At the same time, Padgett gave him a powerful thought-order, and Wayne responded instantly.

"Wouldn't think of it—Everything's on me! So long, Padgett. Remember me to all our mutual friends."

Padgett got up and took Helen's arm. He was careful to keep facing Wayne, to hold the Broadwayite under control. But how was he to get to the door without releasing control? He solved the problem by backing toward the door, calling back last-minute scraps of talk. In that way he was able to keep him controlled so that he cheerily waved good-by. The other patrons of the Silver Club looked with amazement at the spectacle.

REACHING the door, Padgett grabbed Helen's arm and rushed her out into the street. He had just a glimpse of Arnold Wayne coming out of the psycho-control. Wayne rose, looking bewilderedly after him in stunned astonishment. He knew Wayne was wondering what in the world had happened to him.

Padgett hustled Helen into a taxi and literally shouted her address. As the cab rolled away, Padgett looked back and saw Arnold Wayne emerge from the club and stare baffledly after them.

When they reached the deserted lobby of Helen's apartment building, Padgett summoned up his courage. He'd never kissed Helen good night, for he'd always been too timid. But now things were different.

"It was a wonderful evening, Walter," she was saying. "I had no idea you knew people like Arnold Wayne."

"Oh, that's nothing," Padgett said. As he spoke, he was hurling his thought at Helen along the invisible psycho-beam. "You're in love with me—You want to kiss me!" he thought intently.

The results were immediate. Helen stared with dawning wonder, then suddenly threw her arms around his neck.

"Oh, Walter, aren't you going to kiss me good night?" she whispered.

It was like a high-voltage electric shock to Padgett. He hadn't expected the suggestion to work so fast. But it only lasted a moment. Padgett didn't realize in his blissful confusion that he was no longer facing Helen. He was looking over her shoulder as she snuggled in his arms. For an instant, she was out of the path of his psycho-power beam. She tore herself from his arms, looked at him in bewildered amazement.

"Why, what made me do that?" she cried. "I must have had too much champagne to drink."

Hastily Padgett turned on the power again.

Helen's face grew tender as she gazed deeply into his eyes.

"Walter, why are you so shy?" she asked softly. "Don't you want to kiss me?"

She planted a lingering kiss on his lips. Padgett reeled from the wonderful sensation. As before, in his emotion he forgot to keep his thought-command constant. Through the rosy haze in which he dwelt, there came a stinging slap on his face.

"What do you mean by kissing me like that?" she demanded.

"But it was you kissed me," he protested.

"Oh, I must be losing my mind," she sobbed in confusion. "I don't know what's happening to me. Please go."

PADGETT found her disappearing into the elevator before he was able to take a fresh command of the situation. It had seemed so simple to him to control everybody with his new psycho-power, but in practice he was finding that it was a slippery business. The minute he relaxed his vigilance, his subjects reverted to normal.

Padgett thought ruefully that the Vegan had been right. The psycho-power certainly wasn't easy to handle. Already it had nearly got him into trouble at the Silver Club, and it had upset Helen badly. Maybe she wouldn't even want to see him again.

"I've got to learn how to handle the power better," he muttered, leaving the building. "Then I'll really be able to use it."

A man ran toward him as he reached the street.

"Padgett, I want to talk to you!"

Padgett's heart sank. He recognized the tall, lithe figure in evening clothes, and the dark, handsome face. He realized that Wayne must have grabbed a taxi and followed them. The promoter, then, was seeking vengeance for the trick Padgett had played on him. Padgett hurled a frantic thought at Wayne.

"You want to leave here. You're going back downtown!"

At once, Wayne turned and walked rapidly away. But when he had gone a hundred feet, he stopped and turned. Padgett realized sinkingly that Wayne was beyond the range of psycho-control.

"By heaven, you did it to me again!"

Padgett felt desperate. How was he to get rid of Wayne? He could send him away again, but he wouldn't go more than a hundred feet, for the psycho-power faded out at that distance.

"Listen to me, Padgett," Wayne was saying earnestly as he approached. "Don't use this super-hypnotism or whatever it is on me again. I just want to have a friendly little talk with you."

"You're not angry about what I did at the Silver Club?" Padgett asked doubtfully.

"Angry? Not a bit! I'm just curious about the way you make me do things I don't want to do. How in the world is it done?"

Padgett saw in the dark, handsome face of the promoter nothing but an eager, consuming interest. Being admired by the famous Broadwayite made Padgett feel proud of himself.

"What makes you think I've got any queer powers?" he asked cautiously.

"Why, I never experienced anything like it!" Wayne exclaimed. "There I sat in the Silver Club, saying that you were an old friend of mine. Even while I said it, I knew it wasn't true. Yet I couldn't help saying it. I figure it was some kind of hypnotism. Right?"

Padgett expanded under Wayne's eager talk.

"It's not hypnotism," he said importantly. "It's something new."

"New? I'll say it is! Come over to my apartment and have a drink, will you? I'd like to talk to you."

The eager flattery made Padgett feel that here was a man who realized his true gifts.

WAYNE'S apartment was on the other side of the park, a tower suite paneled in tulip wood. Its broad balcony overlooked Fifth Avenue's gold-lighted lane. A mask-faced valet admitted them and brought frosty highballs.

"How do you do that if it isn't hypnotism?" Arnold Wayne asked, his dark face keen with interest.

Padgett tapped his head. "It's all right in here."

"What do you mean?"

Padgett's confidence had been further buoyed by the highball.

"It's a thing in my head—a psycho-power projector. It projects my will as an amplified electric beam."

Wayne gaped. "You mean you developed an apparatus like that?"

"Well, I didn't exactly develop it," Padgett admitted. He told Wayne about his experience with the Vegan.

"It sounds impossible," Arnold Wayne declared.

"It's true, all right," Padgett assured him. "You know, since I got the power, I've been wondering. Maybe the people who are so dominating are really just people whose brains happen to generate a powerful thought-current—a kind of electric aura, something like the psycho-beam from my projector, only not so powerful."

"That's an idea," Wayne said thoughtfully. "Maybe a few brains are so powerful electrically that anyone who comes within their field experiences an induced thought-current."

"That would explain why dictators are able to influence all kinds of people who ought to know better, wouldn't it?" Padgett asked.

"It would, at that. But even the most dominating of them aren't in the same class with you. What are you going to do with this power of yours?"

WALTER PADGETT shrugged. "Well, I'm going to make them give me a raise down at the office. I deserve that. I thought I could use it to make Helen fall in love with me, but it only made her angry and upset as soon as I released control."

"Well, I'll be damned!" Wayne blurted. "You only intend to use it to get a raise? Why, you can make millions just by influencing politicians and financiers! Padgett, you let me manage this power of yours, and within a year we'll own the City of New York."

"But it wouldn't be honest to use the psycho-power that way," Padgett objected.

"Not honest?" Arnold Wayne repeated. "You don't want to use the power to make millions?"

Padgett squirmed uneasily.

"Why, I couldn't use it for graft or things like that."

The promoter's expression changed, and his brilliant smile flashed.

"Of course you wouldn't," he declared heartily. "I can tell there's nothing dishonest about you."

Padgett stood up.

"I'll have to be going if I'm to get up for work tomorrow. I sure am glad you're not

angry with me, Mr. Wayne."

"I want you to feel that you and I are friends, Padgett," said Arnold Wayne genially. "We're going to see a lot of each other."

CHAPTER V

The Trap

PADGETT returned thoughtfully to the rooming house he called home. He felt disappointed as he prepared to retire. He'd thought it would be simple to make Helen fall madly in love with him. But he'd forgotten that he couldn't keep her under constant psycho-control. He shouldn't have made her kiss him like that, he decided gloomily.

He was startled by a shrill voice from the open window.

"So I was right when I said you might not be able to handle the psycho-power!"

Padgett ran wildly to the window. Nobody was there. When he looked out, he saw no one. But the shrill voice spoke from directly in front of him.

"If you stand out of my way, I will come inside."

Padgett recoiled. A vague, floating shadow appeared in the window, swiftly became more opaque. And there was the Vegan. It floated in its queer chairlike apparatus, that bristled with so many mysterious tubes, switches and mechanisms. The enormous pink head glistened in the lamplight and the round, glowing eyes were fixed severely on Padgett.

"I heard your thoughts just now. You're finding the psycho-power more than you bargained for, aren't you?"

Padgett gulped. "How were you able to find me, among all the people in New York?"

"That was simple," said the Vegan impatiently. "Every mind's vibrations are of different frequency. I simply tuned to yours, and came directly to you."

"I—I thought you'd be busy with that survey of Earth you said you were going to conduct."

"My survey of this little planet is already almost completed. I am using a lonely mountain-top hundreds of miles from here for a base. I have recorded most of the data about your world which is likely to be of any value to our scientists. In a day or so, I will be departing to continue my exploratory cruise. I came to find out, before I left, if you hadn't changed your mind about the psycho-power."

"Changed my mind about the psycho-power?" Padgett repeated. "What do you mean?"

"Do you still want the psycho-power or would you rather have me take it back? I can read from your mind that the power has already given you trouble. It will get you into worse trouble, before you are through. You will not be able to get rid of it, for none of your clumsy surgeons could remove the projector from your skull without killing you. That is why I think you had better let me take back the psycho-power before I leave."

PADGETT felt a shiver of apprehension, so solemn was the Vegan's shrill voice. He knew that, as regarded mental capacity, he was just a child, compared with this strange, super-civilized representative of an alien race. The Vegan's advice about giving up his psycho-power might be sound.

"But I can't give it up!" he burst out. "With the psycho-power I'm like I've always wanted to be—dominating and masterful with people."

"You are being foolish. It is what I might expect from a member of a race as mentally weak as yours."

"We may not be as far advanced as your people, but we haven't done so badly," Padgett protested. "Look at our machines, and our cities."

"I have looked at them. I have not seen anything as bad since I stopped at a low-type world of the star, Altair. And even that world wasn't as badly mismanaged as this one. You don't try to set up meteorological machinery to abate climatic conditions. You simply crawl into dark, unsanitary shelters like this one, and call a squalid, planless huddle of such shelters a city."

"Your ideas of power production are touchingly childish. Your only sources of power are the oxidization of fossilized plants and putrified mollusks, in chemical engines whose inefficiency is phenomenal. Instead of trying to cooperate to rationalize such an unscientific world, you periodically attempt to slaughter each other. When the College of Star Wisdom reads my report, they will laugh."

Padgett grumbled and shifted uneasily.

"Well, maybe we're not so smart from your viewpoint. But I'm smart enough not to give up the psycho-power, now that I have it. It has caused me some troubles I hadn't expected. But all the same, I want to keep it. For the first time in my life, I'm an aggressive, dominating person."

"You could be that, without the psycho-projector," the Vegan retorted. "You are merely too timid to use your inherent psycho-power."

"Inherent psycho-power?" Padgett repeated. He remembered his conversation on that with Arnold Wayne. "Then my guess was right. Everybody has a certain amount of psycho-power."

"Of course. Everyone has it to a certain degree. People who are bold enough to will strongly can dominate others to some extent. Why don't you give up the projector and develop your own inherent power?"

GRIMLY, Padgett shook his head. "I'd just be a nobody again."

The Vegan looked baffled and worried.

"I hate the idea of leaving you saddled with the psycho-power. It will be a poor reward for the great service you did me. Perhaps I ought to take the psycho-power from you forcibly."

"You wouldn't do that!" Padgett yelled, retreating. "Not after what I did for you."

"I see there is no use reasoning with an individual of your primitive race. Good-by." Floating in its chair toward the open window, the Vegan touched a knob with one tiny hand. Swiftly it faded and van-

ished.

"Gone back to the star shell," Padgett muttered. "Maybe I ought to have listened, and got rid of the psycho-power when I could. . . . No! I've got the power, and I'm keeping it. There's no trouble I could get into that it couldn't get me out of. And when I get to the office in the morning and turn it on Brockway—"

He cherished that idea, to keep his mind from the grave doubts that persisted in his subconscious.

Padgett was awakened next morning by a hand shaking his shoulder. He sat up, rubbing his eyes. Two hard-faced men were standing beside his bed.

"What is it?" he bleated. "Who are you?"

One of the men flashed a badge.

"You know a girl named Helen Gray, don't you? You were out with her last night."

"Why, yes," Padgett admitted. "What about it?"

"When did you leave her?" the detective rasped.

"One o'clock. Why? What's the matter?"

"She was kidnaped at four this morning. Got any idea who did it?"

"Kidnaped!" Padgett cried appalledly. "She couldn't pay any ransom. She hasn't even any relatives."

The detective shrugged. "People heard her cry and saw two men drive her off in a car."

"Good Lord! You've got to find her!"

"We're doin' our best. So you don't know anything about it? Well, that's all for now."

WHEN the detectives had gone, Padgett dressed hastily.

"Who would kidnap Helen?" he mumbled frantically. "If Frank Fessler has dared—"

The telephone rang as he finished dressing.

"Padgett, I've heard of the kidnaping of your girl and I think I can help you find her," Wayne said earnestly. "Come right over."

"I'll be there in ten minutes!" Padgett stated.

He dashed out and hailed a taxi.

When he entered Wayne's magnificent apartment, he found two men there beside the promoter. One was the tubby Brower, whom he had met in the Silver Club. The other was a gray-haired, fox-faced man with gimlet eyes, who sat calmly playing solitaire.

"Hello, Padgett," Wayne said. "You know Barry Brower, and this is Harper Harris, another of my associates."

"What about Helen?" Padgett cried. "Have you any idea who kidnaped her?"

Wayne smiled. "Sure, I know who kidnaped her. Two of my men did it at my order."

It took Padgett some time to digest this remarkable announcement.

"You had Helen kidnaped? Why?"

"We'll come to that," Wayne said coolly. "In the meantime, sit down and have a drink."

"Why, you—you criminal!" Padgett exploded. "Where's Helen?"

"I don't know that," Wayne said. "None of us does. That's the way I planned it."

Padgett suddenly remembered his psycho-power.

"You want to tell me where Helen is," he thought.

Arnold Wayne's face stiffened.

"I want to tell you where Helen is—but I don't know."

Padgett hurled the thought-command at Brower and Harris. But they couldn't, even under psycho-control, tell where Helen was.

"But if you ordered Helen kidnaped, you must know where she is!" Padgett cried.

Arnold Wayne, recovered from Padgett's control, smiled easily.

"I don't. You see, I ordered my men to kidnap the girl, but not to let us know where she is. Since we don't know, you can't make us tell."

"But why? She can't pay ransom."

"No, but you can. You're going to use this power as I direct, to keep your girl from being harmed."

Enlightenment burst upon Padgett.

"So that's what your plan is! You want me to use the psycho-power dishonestly."

"That's the general idea," Wayne admitted calmly. "You and I are going to loot New York with that power of yours."

CHAPTER VI

Wall Street Wizard

PADGETT stared at Arnold Wayne, who met his stupefied gaze with a cool smile.

"How can you, a respectable promoter, think of doing such a thing?" Padgett gasped.

Wayne grinned. "My promotion business is just a blind. My real business is, to put it bluntly, graft."

"So you're really a crook!" Padgett accused.

"Crook is a hard word," Wayne said wryly. "I'm not such a bad guy. I never had anybody killed. The last thing I want to do is harm you or your girl. You do what I say, and the two of you will come out of this with a share of the profits." Desperately considering the situation, Padgett saw no way of extricating himself. Indirectly it was he who had brought Helen into this peril. No matter what else happened, he must protect her. The only way he could do so was to play ball with Wayne until he was assured of Helen's safety.

"If I do what you want, Helen won't be harmed?"

"You have my word," Wayne promised sincerely. "If you carry out the operations I've planned, my men'll know it from the newspapers and will keep your girl safe. If you don't—Well, I guess you understand."

"What do you want me to do?" he asked hopelessly.

"Padgett, I've got our whole campaign planned!" Wayne gloated. Brower spoke up doubtfully.

"It'll never work out. How can this little guy pull all the things you've got planned?"

"You saw how he controlled us just now

with his psycho-power," Wayne retorted. He turned back to the miserable Padgett. "We need a large stake. I have a good bit, but we'll need two million dollars more. Go down to a Wall Street bank and get two million in cash and negotiable securities."

"How am I going to get two million dollars cash?" Padgett gulped.

"Don't be silly. Walk right in and use your psycho-power."

"It's insane! I'll never get away with it."

Arnold Wayne showed the steel beneath his debonair exterior.

"You'll get it, Padgett. You know what will happen if you don't."

Padgett took a long shuddering breath.

"All right," he said, unhappily. "I'll do my best."

"Don't come back here," Wayne said quickly. "I don't want you contacting me openly. I'll wait for you in your room. Of course, I know you won't think of going to the police, with your girl's life at stake."

"No—no, I won't go to the police," Padgett promised.

LIKE a man in a nightmare, he rode downtown in the morning rush hour. He was about to attempt a crime from which even the most audacious of crooks would shrink. How could he hope to succeed?

Then the germ of an idea was born in his mind. Maybe, with the psycho-power, he could get that two million dollars legally!

Padgett stood looking up at the dour Morrow Bank. Everyone had heard of its fabulous riches, and of the immense power and prestige of O. L. Morrow, its crusty president. Padgett felt that if any bank could hand over two million in cash quickly, this one could. But the overpowering impressiveness of the building almost killed Padgett's shaky resolution. Suppose the psycho-power failed him? Helen would never be heard from again.

He forced himself to enter the magnificent marble lobby, and approached the office of the president. A secretary looked up pleasantly.

"I want to see Mr. Morrow," he said breathlessly. "I don't have any appointment, but I've got to see him."

The girl did not smile at this scrubby little clerk who was asking to see the financial potentate.

"I'm afraid Mr. Morrow can't possibly see you today," she said. "If you'll write for an appointment, stating your business—"

She stopped suddenly. Padgett had hurled a psycho-command at her.

"Of course Mr. Morrow will see you," she said. She pressed a communicator button. "Mr. Padgett to see you on extremely urgent business, Mr. Morrow."

Padgett hastened into the president's office and shut the door before the secretary could regain her normal will-power. O. L. Morrow looked up. He was a pompous, gruff, white-whiskered man.

"Padgett?" he repeated. "Why did my secretary let you in? I'll discharge that confounded girl."

"I had to see you personally because I

want to borrow a large sum from your institution, Mr. Morrow," Padgett bleated. "Two million dollars, in cash and negotiable securities."

MORROW'S ideas of his visitor abruptly changed.

"Have a chair, Mr. Padgett," he invited hastily. "Cigar? May I ask what interests you represent?"

"Private interests," Padgett said, with a mysterious air.

"Ah, secret deal, eh?" Morrow said knowingly. "Of course you can put up ample collateral for the amount."

"Yes. I'll put this up for security."

Padgett drew out his pocket watch and laid it on the desk. Morrow stared at it, then at Padgett, and his fierce white whiskers began to twitch.

"What kind of insane joke is this?" he exploded. "Are you trying to borrow two million in cash on a dollar watch?"

"That's the idea," Padgett said. "I thought you'd let me have the money. It's a pretty good watch."

Morrow became purple. Padgett hurled his psycho-power in an intense effort of will. The president picked up the watch and looked at it.

"Why, I guess it's good for a two million loan," he declared mildly. "I'll have it attended to at once."

He pressed two buttons. The secretary entered, and also a brisk man who looked sharp as a razor.

"Perkins," Morrow ordered, "collect two million in cash and negotiable securities and bring it here. Miss Drew, draw up a note for Walter Padgett and bring it in here for signing."

"Shall I name any security in the note?" the girl asked.

"Yes, this watch," Morrow declared impatiently.

"You're lending two million on *that*?" Perkins gasped.

"Of course," snapped Morrow, still under Padgett's psycho-control. "Will you obey orders or shall I call someone else?"

Perkins smiled. "Oh, a secret loan." He chuckled appreciatively. "It's a good touch, sir—putting in the watch as security."

"Get that money and securities, and hurry up about it," O. L. Morrow commanded.

In ten minutes the deal was consummated. Padgett signed the note, promising to pay back the two million or forfeit his watch.

He picked up the black bag of securities and currency. But how was he to get out? Padgett had an inspiration. He projected a new thought into O. L. Morrow's mind, and the financier arose.

"I'll see you to the street, Padgett," the great financier said genially.

OFFICIALS and clients in the lobby stared respectfully at Padgett as he was escorted out by O. L. Morrow in person. He kept his head turned toward Morrow, as though listening intently, maintaining his control of the financier with grim desperation. He hailed a cab and backed into it.

"Uptown," he ordered, facing Morrow.

As the cab rolled away, Padgett saw the financier's face suddenly freeze, and knew that Morrow was regaining normality.

Arnold Wayne was waiting with Brower in Padgett's room when the clerk staggered in and dumped the black bag on the floor.

"There it is," he gasped, sinking nervelessly into a chair.

Wayne and Brower feverishly opened the bag.

"By Heaven, he did it!" Brower choked. "Two million, and he brings it in, just like that."

"How did you get it?" Wayne asked.

"I borrowed it on my watch, from O. L. Morrow," Padgett said weakly.

"Listen to the guy!" Brower gasped. "He goes down and borrows two million from O. L. Morrow—on his watch!"

Arnold Wayne's black eyes flashed excitedly.

"Didn't I tell you Padgett and I could take New York apart? Brower, hustle this money right back to Wall Street. Use this, and everything I've got in my account, to sell stocks short."

"Sell short?" Brower echoed incredulously. "Why, the market's going up strong!"

"It won't be going up when I get Padgett to work on the next step in our campaign," Wayne declared.

As Brower hastened away with the black bag, Wayne slapped Padgett on the shoulder.

"Padgett, we're going to own most of New York, and rule the rest."

"I don't want to rule anything," Padgett moaned. "I'm sorry I ever got the psycho-power."

"Don't talk like that," Wayne snorted. "You and your girl will come out of this with millions. Have a drink and buck up."

"I don't want any drink," Padgett mumbled. "Won't you let Helen go, now?"

"Not on your life!" Wayne retorted. "Why, we're only beginning—"

He was interrupted by a thunderous knock on the door.

"Who is it?" Padgett called tremulously.

"Police!" a man roared. "We want you for fraud. We trailed your cab."

PADGETT leaped up and ran around blindly, moaning.

"Don't get rattled," whispered Wayne. "Use your psycho-beam through the door."

Padgett desperately hurled his thought-command. But, to his horror, the thunderous rapping continued.

"It doesn't work!" he breathed. "That door's made of painted steel. The psycho-beam can't penetrate metal."

"Hell of a time to discover that," Arnold Wayne muttered, frowning. Then his face cleared. "But maybe this fits right in with my plan for the next operation. When they take you down to headquarters, old O. L. Morrow will be there to prefer charges."

"Yes, and he'll send me to prison for life," Padgett groaned.

"You borrowed the money legally, didn't you?" snapped Wayne. "Listen to me, now. I'm going to beat it down the fire-escape. You go with the police. When you get down

there with old Morrow, here's what you do—"

When Wayne departed by the fire-escape after giving rapid instructions, Padgett opened the door. A captain of detectives and three officers seized Padgett.

"This is our man!" the captain exclaimed. "Look around for the money, men."

"What have I done?" Padgett demanded.

"You know what you've done," the captain grated. "You hypnotized old O. L. Morrow out of two million dollars in cash and securities."

"No money here, sir," reported the detectives.

"So you cached it somewhere, eh? Where did you hide it?"

Padgett summoned his determination and obeyed Arnold Wayne's instructions. He had to—with Helen's safety as the forfeit.

"I've nothing to say," he stated defiantly, "except that I borrowed the money from O. L. Morrow in perfectly legal fashion."

"We'll see what Morrow says to that. He's down at Headquarters now, foaming at the mouth. Bring this crook along, boys."

CHAPTER VII

Crime Campaign

WHEN they entered the commissioner's office at Headquarters, O. L. Morrow bounded from his chair with surprising agility. He pointed a shaking finger at Padgett.

"That's the fellow!" he yelled. "Came in my office and hypnotized me. Two million dollars—on an old watch! He ought to get the electric chair."

Police Commissioner Landon stared from the raging Morrow to the drab-looking young clerk, with obvious perplexity on his massive face.

"This is a queer charge, Mr. Morrow," he said doubtfully. "I don't know much about hypnotism, but I'd say that no hypnotist could do that."

"But he did it, I tell you!" Morrow roared. "Do you think I'd lend two million on a watch if I wasn't hypnotized?"

The commissioner picked up a department telephone.

"I'm going to call in Doctor Keys, the medical examiner. He can tell us about this hypnotism business."

Doctor Keys appeared a few minutes later, listened to the case; and then briskly shook his head.

"No, Mr. Morrow couldn't have been made to do a thing like that by hypnotism," he declared. "No hypnotized subject will follow a suggestion contrary to his fundamental character."

"But I did it!" cried the financier.

Doctor Keys looked at Padgett thoughtfully.

"There have been cases reported, in which certain remarkable individuals seem to influence subjects by a form of telepathic suggestion."

Padgett started. The doctor was getting too close to the truth for comfort.

"Telepathic suggestion?" the commissioner was repeating. "I thought that stuff

was moonshine."

"Not at all," Keys denied. "Science has learned that the brain is actually a chemical electric battery, a generator of impulses which ordinary instruments can't even detect. The experiments of Doctor Rhine of Duke University have shown that what he calls Extra Sensory Perception is a real property of the brain. Somehow it is able to perceive things which are imperceptible to the five ordinary senses."

Landon scratched his head.

"You mean, if I think a thing hard enough, you'll catch my thought and do what I'm thinking of?"

"That's right. Some people seem to have enough natural power of this kind to completely dominate others."

"But whoever heard of anyone being able to make a man like Mr. Morrow give up two million dollars?" asked the commissioner incredulously.

The doctor shrugged. "I admit that seems beyond the realm of possibility."

"This telepathic influence is all nonsense," Padgett said loudly. "I borrowed that money from Mr. Morrow as a private loan. It was perfectly legal."

COMMISSIONER LANDON looked perplexed.

"This is mighty puzzling. We'll have to hold Padgett till it's fully investigated."

"His girl disappeared last night, Commissioner," the detective-captain put in. "We thought at first it was a kidnaping, but it looks now as though she may be mixed up in this business."

The commissioner nodded. "We'll have to look into that angle, too. Take him out and book him."

Padgett realized that it was time for him to act, if he wanted to stay from behind bars. He had hoped he could avoid using the psycho-power in front of so many people, but there was no help for it now. He turned unobtrusively and directed a strong thought-command at the financier. Morrow suddenly laughed aloud.

"Well, Padgett, this is one on you?"

"One on him?" echoed the commissioner. "What do you mean?"

"Padgett is the son of a late wealthy friend of mine," Morrow said, chuckling. "He's working his way up from the bottom in the insurance business. I advanced him the two millions from his estate for charity. But young Padgett is a confirmed practical joker. He's played several confounded pranks on me, so I saw a chance to get even by having him put under arrest."

Commissioner Landon crimsoned with anger, but restrained himself. O. L. Morrow was not a man to be reprimanded casually.

"I suggest you don't play any more practical jokes involving the Police Department, Mr. Morrow," he said quietly.

"Oh, I won't," Morrow apologized. "But it was such a good chance to pay off Padgett for his pranks. I had you all nearly believing it, too. Come along, Padgett, and I'll buy your lunch for consolation."

Keeping Morrow desperately under psycho-control and putting the words into his mouth, Padgett saw with terrific relief

that the commissioner and the others believed the financier. Only Miss Drew looked puzzled. Morrow had taken Padgett's arm and was starting for the door.

"There's a crowd of reporters outside to see you, Mr. Morrow," Perkins, the cashier, warned hastily. "Of course, you won't see them."

But Padgett, who had his instructions from Arnold Wayne, shot a new thought-order at Morrow.

"On the contrary, I will see them," the banker declared.

THE crowd of reporters in the outer office seethed with incredulous excitement when Morrow nodded to them.

"I have a statement to make about the stock market," the financier said gravely, obedient to Padgett's psycho-command.

The reporters waited tensely. Never in his life had the great O. L. Morrow, the Sphinx of Wall Street, given out even the vaguest hint about the financial market.

"In my opinion," he said, "the prices of almost all common stocks are far too high. It is a bubble that must soon burst. I expect a sudden drastic decline at any moment."

With a wild whoop, the reporters dived for telephones. Perkins, the cashier, seemed dazed as he clawed at Morrow's coat.

"Good Lord, Mr. Morrow, that statement will send the market into a nose-dive!"

"I can't help that," the banker said, shaking his head. "Come along, Padgett."

Padgett breathed more easily when he got outside with the financier. Yet he knew he was still not out of the woods. Desperately he cudgelled his wits for a way to get rid of Morrow. He couldn't just walk off and leave him. The minute he was normal, Morrow would set up a yell and they'd grab Padgett again. Yet he couldn't keep Morrow controlled forever.

The hoot of a distant tug brought an inspiration. He bought a newspaper at a corner stand. About to inspect its shipping page, he remembered that if he diverted his attention even that long, Morrow would snap out of it. Padgett solved this minor difficulty by making the banker read the shipping page to him. He soon found out what he wanted. There was a liner leaving for a South American cruise in two hours.

Sweating and nervous, Padgett reached the noisy, crowded pier of the liner with O. L. Morrow. He had had to keep Morrow under psycho-control every minute of booking passage, packing, and getting him up the gangplank. Padgett stood intently facing and controlling Morrow, at the ship-rail fifty feet above. Would the ship never sail?

At last the gangplank was drawn in, and the big liner edged ponderously into the river. Padgett saw Morrow's cheerful face begin to freeze in bewilderment. As the distance increased, his psycho-control was fading.

"Stop this ship!" the banker yelled. "I was forced into this—"

PADGETT hastily scuttled uptown. At least, he had got rid of Morrow for a month. He heard newsboys bawling hoarsely on every corner.

"Big crash in stock market! Stocks plunge to new lows!"

"I caused that," Padgett muttered sickly. "Oh, Lord, it's got to stop."

He went with shaky determination to the Fifth Avenue tower where Arnold Wayne lived. He must get himself and Helen out of this awful mess before he got deeper into crime.

Arnold Wayne himself opened the door. He had a highball in his hand, and he had been talking excitedly to Brower and the gimlet-eyed Harris.

"I told you not to come here, Padgett, but it's all right. Anybody that did a job like you did today deserves to break the rules. Come on in and have a drink."

The three men crowded around Padgett, slapping his back, congratulating him, thrusting a tall glass into his hand.

"Boy, did that market flop when Morrow's statement hit the floor!" exclaimed Brower.

"Padgett, we've made millions," boasted Wayne. "We closed out before Morrow could deny his statement. Where is the old boy, anyway?"

"I put him on a boat to South America," Padgett said unhappily.

"You've got a real head on your shoulders," the promoter applauded. "You've done swell, and this is only the beginning. Wait till I'm boss of every single racket in this city. And you're going to make it possible, Padgett."

"Me?" the clerk cried in horror.

"That's right. You'll put Brower into office as Police Commissioner."

"B—but only the mayor can appoint a new commissioner—and I'm not the mayor!"

"No, but you can make the mayor do what you want by psycho-power," Wayne said calmly. "You'll go to him with Brower and make him fire Landon and appoint our pal. After it's done, the mayor may wonder why he did it, but he can't undo it for no reason."

Padgett recoiled. For the first time, he realized the ruthless scope of this debonair crook's aims.

"Why, with your man as head of the Police, you could run New York!" he gasped.

"That's the idea. He'll start a clean-up of all rackets—all except the ones that play ball with me. Any racket that refuses to pay me a regular out will be wiped out by the police. Sweet, isn't it?"

"Putting the police into the hands of a grafter like you?" Padgett cried. "No, I won't do it! You can't make me!"

ARNOLD WAYNE'S eyes narrowed. "Remember, that girl of yours is still in the hands of my men."

"Your men won't harm her. You can't tell them to do anything to her, because you don't know yourself where they're holding her."

"That's true," Wayne said with dangerous softness. "But do you see this? It's the schedule of operations I planned for you. Before I sent my men to kidnap your girl, I had them memorize it. Now they're watching the newspapers to see whether you're obeying me."

Padgett stared at the schedule. It was a list of dates, and opposite each date was the criminal operation planned for that day. "June fourteenth—that's today," he blurted. "Stock market to break. June fifteenth—the mayor to announce replacement of Police Commissioner Landon by Brower. June sixteenth—District Attorney Mason to announce suddenly his resignation due to ill health."

"You see, Padgett," Arnold Wayne interrupted. "I've got the whole campaign all planned. Tonight you'll use the mayor to put Brower in as commissioner, and it'll be announced in the morning newspapers. Tomorrow night, you'll use psycho-power on District Attorney Mason to make him resign, so I can get one of my own men in his place—and that will be reported. But if the newspapers show you're not sticking to schedule, my men will see that your girl won't be heard of again."

"And if I carry out all your orders according to this schedule?" Padgett asked hoarsely.

"When the whole campaign is finished, you and Helen will be free."

The diabolical ingenuity of Wayne's scheme made Padgett feel helpless. It didn't leave a chance to use his psycho-power to find Helen. But he saw a faint glimmer of hope. There might be a tiny crack in Wayne's elaborate plan—

"All right, I'll do what you want," Padgett said dully.

"Now you're showing sense. Go with Brower to the mayor's home right now. Give him the works and have Brower appointed, and the newspapers notified. Then maybe you'd better send the mayor off on a plane trip just to make sure he doesn't try to back out of the appointment."

Padgett, appalled and powerless, realized that this crazy entanglement, into which his psycho-power had got him, was getting more fantastically perilous every hour.

CHAPTER VIII

Public Enemy Padgett

AS Brower drove toward the mayor's home, Padgett was feverishly trying to find a way out of this mad dilemma. Helen's captivity made him helpless, he knew. If she were safe, he could defy Arnold Wayne's orders. He must find her and get her out of danger. But how? Then he remembered the faint glimmer of hope he had had when Wayne explained his crime-schedule. It was an idea that might work. But if it didn't—

Fiercely Padgett decided to try it. The gamble was better than letting himself be forced to go on with Wayne's criminal campaign. And at once, he put his idea into operation. He faced Brower and shot him a psycho-command. Brower instantly pulled over to the curb. Then Padgett hurled a strong thought-command.

"Who are the men that Wayne had kidnapped Helen? What are their names?"

"Burr and Keeley. Burr is one of Wayne's undercover racket-men," Brower answered.

"Do you know what paper Burr reads?"

Brower frowned. "The *Globe*. It has the best sports section."

"That's an evening paper and the final edition will be out in an hour or so," Padgett muttered. "And Burr, wherever he is with the other crook and Helen, will be buying that paper."

He realized suddenly that he had forgotten Brower. The tubby, bald man was coming back to normal. Hastily Padgett turned on his psycho-control again. How could he get rid of Brower? Then he remembered Wayne's instructions to put the mayor on a plane.

He had Brower drive out to the airport and forced him to board the Miami plane. With a sigh of relief he saw the ship take off.

Padgett drove back and went straight to the offices of the New York *Globe*. He knew he was taking a slim chance, but it was the only way he could possibly find Helen and get out of Wayne's power.

It was, of course, easy for him to enter the office of the city editor, who was relaxing with a cigar after sending down the final edition.

"Well, what is it?" demanded the editor.

Padgett had spotted the number on the editor's desk-telephone. He wrote a few words on a slip of paper, and handed it to the editor.

"I want you to run this in big type in a little box on your front page in the last edition," Padgett said.

"Burr and Keeley—Plan changed. Call me at once at Gotham six-six-six-seven. A. W.," the editor read aloud. "You want me to box this on page one? Well, I'll be damned! Of all the crust—"

He stopped suddenly. Padgett had hurled the invisible psycho-beam at him.

"Why, of course, we'll run it for you!" the editor said. "Copy-boy! Shoot this down to the composers. Tell them to box it in the middle of page one."

PADGETT took a chair across the desk from the editor. He knew he must keep him under control until the newspaper was on the streets. Reporters came in, every few minutes. Padgett forced the city editor to growl:

"Don't bother me. I don't want to be disturbed."

A wet copy of the new edition was brought in and slapped down on the desk. Padgett could see that his message was indeed printed in large type at the center of the front page.

Padgett continued to wait. The papers would be streaming out all over town by now. If Burr got the paper and saw the message and thought it came from Arnold Wayne, then Burr would call this number.

Each time the telephone rang, Padgett jumped at it. But each time it was only someone on newspaper business. When his mind seemed about to crack from the strain of keeping the editor under control, a deep, harsh voice came over the phone.

"This is Burr. Is that you, Boss? I saw your notice in the *Globe*, but I don't get it. You said you didn't want to know where we are."

Padgett made his voice as much as possible like Arnold Wayne's.

"Change of plan," he stated. "I've got to see you at once. Where are you and Keeley holding the girl?"

"In a loft at three-forty-five Flower Street. Are you coming down?"

"Yes," Padgett answered. "I'll knock four times as a signal."

He hung up, then felt sharp dismay. He had forgotten about the editor while he was talking to Burr.

"Why, you hypnotized me or something!" the man whispered awedly. "You made me put your crazy notice on page one, when I didn't want to—"

Before the editor could yell, Padgett clamped down psycho-control again.

"You're going to escort me out of the building," he ordered desperately.

The editor obeyed the mental command. On the street, Padgett kept his victim with him till he hailed a taxi. But as he turned to jump into the taxi the editor uttered a resounding, terrified shout.

"Police!"

A patrolman came running, brandishing his pistol.

"Stop!" he cried.

Padgett turned and let the patrolman have the psycho-beam squarely.

"Give me that gun!" he thought.

"Here's my gun, mister," said the patrolman genially, handing it over.

The editor and taxi-driver gaped, stupefied. Padgett leaped into the taxi. There was no time to argue with the dazed driver. He shot him a psycho-command that sent them off in a screaming start.

Padgett knew vaguely that Flower Street was one of the short streets of warehouses and light manufacturing plants on the lower East Side. He had the taxi-driver let him out a block from there.

Returning to normal, the driver stared at Padgett in horrified bewilderment. With a startled squawk he fled in his cab.

FLOWER STREET was almost deserted at this late afternoon hour. Number 345 was a dingy, narrow brick building between two towering wholesale houses. The door was unlocked and there was no watchman. The building was vacant. Padgett's heart was pounding as he climbed the dark stairs.

He paused at the loft door. He could hear a radio playing swing music somewhere beyond it. Swallowing a lump in his throat, Padgett drew the pistol he'd taken from the patrolman. He knocked four times.

The door opened. Inside stood a hulking, beetle-browed man. A smaller, rat-faced man was turning from the radio.

"You're not Wayne!" the big man exclaimed. His hand went to his hip. "Keeley, it's a plant!"

Padgett acted with frantic speed. He shot a psycho-command at Burr.

"Jump Keeley! Overpower him!"

The hulking man, instantly responsive to that order, turned and leaped on his partner. He bore the amazed Keeley to the floor, and clipped him on the jaw with a knock-out blow.

"Now tie him up!" Padgett ordered mentally.

Burr obeyed, using a roll of adhesive tape from his pocket. Padgett then ordered Burr to advance. Keeping the hulking racketeer under psycho-control, Padgett forced him to hold out his hands, and rapidly bound them with the strong tape. The rest was easy. In a few moments, Burr was also effectually bound and gagged.

Padgett looked around. There was nothing in the loft but a couple of cots, the radio, a small gasoline stove, and some canned foods. But there was also a door at the end of the loft. He ran to it, unlocked it, and peered into the room beyond.

"Helen!" he cried joyfully.

The girl had started from the cot on which she had been sitting. Her pale face lit up with relief.

"Walter! I've been hoping someone would find me. But I never dreamed that you—"

When she saw the two bound men in the loft, her expression became even more astonished.

"You overpowered those two awful men by yourself?"

At another time, Padgett would have glowed at the admiration in her tone. But now there was no time for basking.

"Helen, it was Arnold Wayne—the man you met at the Silver Club—who had these men kidnap you," he explained. "He did it to get a hold over me."

"Arnold Wayne—a criminal?" Helen gasped. "I can't believe it! Why would he want any hold over you?"

"It's my psycho-power," he said earnestly. "You see, Helen, I can make anybody do anything I want."

HE poured out the whole story from the moment he had met the Vegan until he had found where she was being held prisoner. Helen's brown eyes began to snap.

"Then when I threw myself at your head, and kissed you, it was you who made me do it?"

Padgett hung his head guiltily.

"Yes, I know it wasn't right, but I'd always wanted to kiss you, and I'd never dared."

Helen's anger seemed to abate a little.

"Well, at least you were fairly decent about it," she conceded.

"I wish I'd never heard of the power!" Padgett cried fervently. "Look at what it's got me into. The police are after me for swindling O. L. Morrow. And that newspaper editor will tell how I controlled him, too."

Padgett came to a desperate decision.

"I'm going to give myself up, and tell the police the truth—that it was Arnold Wayne who forced me to do all those things. You can prove it by telling how you were kidnaped. The police can make these two men talk, maybe. And if they can't, I can."

He grabbed Helen's arm and started for the door. At that moment, the gay swing music from the radio was replaced by the voice of an announcer.

"We interrupt this program for a special bulletin, ladies and gentlemen. The police warn that a dangerous criminal is at large in New York. His name is Walter Padgett, and he has already committed a series of incredible crimes. Chief among them was influencing O. L. Morrow to give him two million dollars. After forcing Mr. Morrow to issue a false statement which broke the stock-market, Padgett shanghai'd the financier onto a South American boat. Later, he interfered with the publication of the New York *Globe*.

"It was at first believed that Padgett accomplished these feats by extraordinary

Padgett and his woman-accomplice in the Silver Club on Sunday night. Mr. Wayne asserts that Padgett used a strange power of hypnotic command. Wayne was forced to visit Padgett's apartment, and the criminal tried to make him an accomplice in his crimes.

"Wayne states that Padgett boasted he could control anybody through what he called a psycho-power projector, a tiny instrument attached to his brain. Wayne says also that the power of this criminal is absolute up to one hundred feet. But he learned by observation that the psycho-power cannot operate through steel or other



Thin rays of force jetted from a tubelike instrument

powers of hypnotism. But scientific authorities have declared that no kind of hypnosis could account for his powers. Now, however, the police have been given a clue to Padgett's strange criminal powers, by a statement just made to them by the well known promoter and Broadway figure, Mr. Arnold Wayne."

"Wayne!" gasped Padgett. "He's gone to the police!"

"Listen, Walter," Helen said tensely.

"MR. WAYNE has told the police," the announcer said, "that he met

metal.

"The police are now combing the city for this so-called Man with the Magic Brain. If his powers are as great as they seem, Walter Padgett is Public Enemy Number One! Any citizens noticing this criminal and his accomplice are asked to notify the police immediately. Their descriptions are as follows—"

Padgett tuned down the radio. He looked at Helen, and his face was almost as pale as hers. His voice came as a rusty croak.

"Wayne got to the police first! He must have known, as soon as Brower called him

from the Miami plane, that I'd revolted against his authority. The notice in the *Globe* would show him I was out to rescue you. So he decided he'd beat me to the accusation."

"But you can still tell the police your side of it, Walter," Helen said anxiously.

"It'd be my word against Arnold Wayne's. He's a well known public figure, and I wouldn't have a bit of proof against him."

For a moment, Padgett felt like giving up the struggle and letting them send him to prison. The cards had all been stacked against him by Wayne's devilish ingenuity. Wayne had made use of him for criminal purposes until he had revolted, then turned on him and denounced him. It looked hopeless now.

Only a few days before, Padgett would have discontinued such a hopeless fight. But the psycho-power had done something to him. He had become so accustomed to asserting himself that now he felt more angry than afraid.

"Damn Wayne!" he swore bitterly. "There must be some way of showing him up for the dirty crook he is."

Helen stared at him, wide-eyed. He didn't sound to her at all like the shy, unobtrusive clerk she had known.

"If I testified about being kidnaped—" she began.

"They wouldn't believe you. They think you're my accomplice." His eye fell on the two bound thugs. "If Burr and Keeley would talk, though, it'd be different."

HE went over and ripped the adhesive gag off Burr's mouth.

"You little shrimp!" howled the thug. "When I get loose—"

"Are you willing to tell the police the truth, that Arnold Wayne ordered you to abduct this girl?" Padgett demanded.

"Don't make me laugh," Burr sneered. "I heard the radio and everything you said. You're wanted yourself, and Wayne's in the clear. I'll tell the bluecoats that you and the girl held us up and brought us here."

Baffled, Padgett replaced the gag and thrust the two bound thugs into a dark closet and locked the door.

"They'll never tell the truth, and there's no way to get direct evidence of Wayne's criminal purposes."

Padgett suddenly stopped, his eyes widening.

"Say, maybe there is a way! The crime-campaign schedule that Wayne drew up and showed me—it was in his own handwriting. That would be proof enough to convict him and clear me. Maybe he didn't remember to destroy it."

"Why didn't you take it when he showed it to you?" Helen asked.

"I couldn't. You were in danger then, and I didn't dare to cross him. I had to let him put it back into his safe." His face fell. "The schedule still must be in that safe in his apartment. And with the police hunting me, it's going to be tough getting there without being arrested. But I've got to do it. That paper's the one thing that can clear me."

"It'll be dark soon, and then there'd be a better chance," Helen suggested.

Padgett nodded. "I'll have to wait till then. Sooner or later, though, Wayne will remember to destroy that incriminating piece of evidence, if he hasn't done so already. I've got to reach him before he does." He sat down wearily on one of the cots. "I'm dog-tired, after this crazy day. Call me as soon as it gets dark, Helen."

He fell asleep almost at once. The girl sat down and watched him worriedly. With fierce desperation, she tried to think of a plan. But this strange psycho-power had got Padgett into trouble. It was the only thing now that could get him out of it.

Helen felt oddly drowsy herself. A flowing tide of lassitude swept through her weary mind and rapidly lulled her senses. She lay back on the cot, and in a moment was asleep.

Then a queer thing happened. In the dusky room, near the one big window that was open, a shadowy, floating thing began to appear, swiftly taking on solidity.

CHAPTER IX

Man With the Magic Brain

THE Vegan floated in its queer chair just inside the open window. Its tiny right hand grasped a tube. From it, an invisible fan of force had sprayed the man and girl, thrusting them into their deep sleep.

"Well," muttered the Vegan shrilly, its glowing eyes fixed on Padgett's sleeping form. "Finally found him. With so many millions of people in this squalid, primeval city, it's hard enough to tune to any one mind and track it down."

The Vegan completely ignored the girl. It floated forward in its chair until it was directly beside Padgett. Its enormous, pink, hairless skull was glistening in the dim light as it looked down at the sleeping clerk. From a little locker in the chair, the Vegan brought forth small, exquisitely finished metal objects. Then it paused, looking doubtfully at Padgett.

"Seems ungrateful of me to take the psycho-power away from him, without his even knowing it. But I must leave this savage little planet now. I cannot reconcile it with my conscience to leave this well meaning young barbarian saddled with the psycho-power that would only get him ever deeper into disaster."

The alien creature's glowing eyes flashed in resolution.

"It is for his own good. I must take the power from him. If I don't do it now, he never will be able to get rid of it after I have left. He would not agree to it, so I shall have to do it without his knowledge."

The Vegan began to work. It did not directly use its hands at all. The surgical instruments were thin rays of force that jetted from the little tubelike objects, which it handled with deft, unswerving skill. One fanlike beam made a smooth cleavage down through Padgett's skull. Other needlelike rays probed down into the opening and unerringly detached from the brain the tiny metal capsule of the psycho-projector.

The Vegan's glowing eyes never shifted from the task. It was apparent that its eyes had been so treated or provided with auxiliary powers that it could look right through Padgett's skull, and wield the tactile and surgical rays without error.

At last the metal capsule was drawn up from Padgett's skull. Quickly the Vegan snicked on a concentrated glow of pink force which bathed the bloodless incision. With incredible speed, under that influence, bone knit to bone and flesh to flesh. In a few minutes, the healing was complete.

"**A**H, that is over with," sighed the Vegan, stowing away the tubes. "He will be surprised when he finds that he has the power no longer. But he'll be better off without it."

It floated in its chair toward the window, paused there. Impatiently it touched a knob, and began to disappear.

"It will be a relief to get away from this primitive planet," the Vegan declared. "I hope the next world I land on is at least partly civilized. These barbaric ones are all the same, really."

Fading, almost invisible as it floated out through the window into the gathering darkness, the Vegan glanced back at Padgett.

"Good-by, Earthman," it murmured. "I hope you do not feel too badly when you find the psycho-power gone. It is for your own good."

Padgett awoke with a vague memory of a dream in which someone had been fumbling at his head. Drowsily he looked around. The dusty loft was now quite dark, for night had fallen. Helen lay sleeping on the other cot. Padgett hastily jumped up and awakened the girl.

"Why, it's dark—I must have fallen asleep too," faltered Helen. "I'm sorry, Walter."

"Listen to that!" Padgett said sharply.

The radio was still mumbling and grumbling in a muted undertone. A newscaster was speaking rapidly.

"Police hunt for the Man with the Magic Brain, as this criminal Padgett is being called. Public interest has risen to a high pitch. Everyone, it seems, wants to know about the Man with the Magic Brain and the crimes he has committed."

Padgett listened, appalled.

"If you see and recognize the Man with the Magic Brain," the newscaster was warning, "don't try to capture him. You would find yourself helpless before his power. He could make you do anything he wanted—even force you to kill yourself, if he so desired. The only safety is behind steel doors. It is known from Mr. Arnold Wayne's experience with this criminal that his power cannot penetrate steel."

"Therefore, if you see the Man with the Magic Brain or his girl accomplice, do not try to catch him. Notify the police at once. Every officer on the Force is on the lookout for him at this moment. A criminal with a super-scientific power like his is the most dangerous and menacing individual in the world."

"They talk as though I were a monster," Padgett muttered angrily. He clenched his

fists. "When I get my hands on Wayne—"

"Walter, look here!" Helen called alarmedly from the window.

Padgett hurried to her side. He frowned as he looked down into the dark street.

TWO policemen were moving along, looking keenly about and flashing their lights into every shadow. They wore, not the regulation police caps, but steel helmets of the type worn by soldiers.

"They're after me?" Padgett gasped. "They're wearing the steel helmets because Wayne told them my psycho-power wouldn't penetrate steel. And it won't. I can't use it on them while they wear their helmets."

"Then what are you going to do—give yourself up?" Helen asked anxiously.

"Give up?" Padgett snapped. "I should say not! It'll take more than a few police to keep me from getting to Wayne."

Helen stared wonderingly at his frowning, determined face.

"Walter, you're so different, so daring and reckless that I'm afraid."

Padgett cut her off with a short, harsh laugh.

"You needn't be afraid for me. I've got my psycho-power. Wayne is the one to be afraid for, when I get to him." He came to rapid decision. "I'm going to get out of here at once. I'll slip out into the alley. I think I can get to Wayne's apartment house uptown without the police seeing me. You wait here."

"I'm going with you," Helen stated.

Padgett eyed her sternly.

"You're going to wait, understand? Do I have to use my power?"

Helen wilted. "All right, Walter. But please be careful."

Padgett slipped down the stairs to the rear of the dark, musty old building, and found a door that emerged into a narrow alleyway. He pulled his hat down to hide his face as he reached a lighted street. Then he shrank back into the shadows. A police car, filled with grim-faced, steel-helmeted officers, shot past him.

"Damn Wayne for telling them that steel would stop the psycho-power!" he grated. "I've got a lot of scores to settle with that smooth Broadway crook."

Padgett found a taxi and jumped into the dark rear seat before the driver could get a good look at him. He gave Wayne's address on Fifth Avenue. The taxi shot away from the curb.

He took care to keep his face shaded as he paid the driver. Staying in the shadows wherever possible, he headed toward Arnold Wayne's house. He was forced to detour a block to avoid a patrolman who stood swinging a club and wearing a steel helmet. Every officer on duty in Manhattan, it seemed, had been issued a regulation steel helmet to make him immune to Padgett's psycho-power. The impressive tower loomed ahead. Padgett could see no police guard around it.

"Wayne wouldn't ask for a police guard—they might ask too many embarrassing questions," he muttered. "He'll probably be on the lookout himself, but that won't do him much good against my power."

HE slipped into the service entrance of the big building. Rapidly he ascended in the freight elevator until he reached the floor of Arnold Wayne's apartment.

Padgett shrank back around the corner, near the stairs. Outside Wayne's door sat Harper Harris, the gimlet-eyed, fox-faced associate of the suave Broadwayite. One of Harris' hands was in his coat-pocket, obviously grasping a pistol. And he wore a steel helmet.

"Hell!" grumbled Padgett. "I might have known Wayne would be smart enough to have his guard put on a helmet."

What was he going to do? The psycho-power was useless against Harris as long as the man was shielded by steel. Padgett had a gun in his pocket, but he didn't dare to get the drop on Harris. The chances were that Harris would shoot it out. Wayne, inside the apartment, would be alarmed and call the police.

As Padgett sweated over his predicament, he noticed the door of a closet on the landing below him. It gave him an idea. He hastened down to the closet and found it crowded with mops, pails and electric sweepers.

Hastily he stripped off his coat and hat, grabbed up a mop and pail. Loudly he climbed the stair again. Keeping his head down, he slouched along the hall. Harris had risen, but now was seating himself again as the pseudo-janitor approached.

Padgett reached the crook. Suddenly he dropped his mop and pail just as Harris, with a gasp of recognition, leaped up.

"No you don't!" Padgett gritted, as Harris grabbed for his gun.

His fist collided with Harris' chin, backed by all his force. The crook sank in a crumpled heap. Padgett felt a tingling glow of satisfaction. It was the first time he had ever knocked out anybody in his life.

"That fixes you," he grunted.

His confidence was soaring as he dragged Harris down to the broom-closet and locked him in it. Quickly but stealthily he climbed again to the door of Wayne's apartment. He could hear voices inside, but the door was locked. He felt baffled. Then he remembered the long balcony outside Wayne's living room. It ran across half the front of the building.

Padgett went to the next apartment and tried its door. It was locked, too, but the apartment beyond was vacant and unlocked. He hurried through to the front window and emerged on the balcony in the soft summer night.

His heart pumping, Padgett crept along the balcony till he reached the French windows of Arnold Wayne's apartment. They were open. As he approached them, he could hear the worried voices of Arnold Wayne and Barry Brower from inside. Padgett smiled grimly to himself.

"Here's where Wayne finds out just what the psycho-power can do to him," he gritted as he crept forward.

REACHING the open windows, Padgett stopped, peering into the big, softly lighted living room. The grim pleasure he had felt at the prospect of the coming en-

counter gave way to shock of surprise.

Arnold Wayne was striding restlessly to and fro, while Brower sat with a tense expression on his face. But both men wore steel helmets!

"I got off the plane at the Philadelphia stop and flew right back," Brower was saying. "And didn't I call you from Philadelphia to warn you what he was doing? The police are bound to get him, Arnold."

"They haven't got him yet," snapped Wayne. "That little mug is liable to be so mad at me for accusing him that he'll try anything. I'll feel easier when he's behind bars."

"Oh, we're safe enough with Harris on guard outside, and with us wearing the helmets. His power can't get through that."

Clenching his fists furiously, Padgett considered the situation. He couldn't use his psycho-power on the two men while they wore the steel helmets. He had to go through with his plan without the help of the psycho-power. A few days ago, he'd have backed down in the face of such a desperate situation. But that was before the psycho-power had made him the dominating person he now was. He'd show Wayne, even though he couldn't use his psycho-power at this moment.

He whipped the pistol from his pocket and stepped into the bright living room.

"Put your hands up, both of you!" he ordered.

Wayne and Brower turned. The tubby attorney, with incredible speed, snatched a gun out of his pocket. Padgett fired, aiming at Brower's pistol. The fat man fell, groaning. The gun flew from his hand as a bullet penetrated his arm.

Arnold Wayne had darted toward his desk. But the crack of the shot and the fall of Brower stopped him. Pale with fear, he raised his hands.

"Don't shoot!" he pleaded.

"You dirty crook!" Padgett snapped. "So you thought you'd hand me over to the police and make me shoulder all the blame for your crimes, as soon as I revolted against your schemes."

"Listen, don't do anything rash," Wayne begged. "I know you're angry about that, but what else could I do when you staged a mutiny on me?"

Padgett glowered at him.

"I've got a good notion to take that helmet off you and then give you a psycho-command to walk off the balcony. Everyone would think it was an accident."

ARNOLD WAYNE sweated. He had had so many demonstrations of Padgett's power that he didn't doubt his ability to carry out his threat.

"No, don't do that, Padgett," he gulped. "After all, I didn't do any harm to you or your girl, did I?"

"No real harm, except to make me hunted by everyone in New York, by forcing me into your criminal campaign. You're going to clear me, Wayne! I want that crime-schedule you showed me."

He was watching Wayne narrowly, and saw the promoter start at mention of the schedule.

"So you didn't remember yet to destroy it!" he cried triumphantly. Get it out of the safe, Wayne."

"But, Padgett—" Arnold Wayne began to protest.

"You've got ten seconds to obey my spoken command," Padgett said ominously.

CHAPTER X

Revelation

BEATEN, Wayne went to the safe and opened it. When he had taken out the folded paper, Padgett snatched it out of his hand. He glanced at it, made sure it was the crime-campaign schedule that Wayne had drawn up.

"Now," he declared, "we're going down to Police Headquarters, and you're going to make a full confession."

They took the freight elevator to the street. Before leaving the building, he halted his prisoner.

"Remove that helmet," he ordered. Wayne was forced to obey. "Now," Padgett said grimly, pocketing his pistol, "I don't need a gun. I can control you with the psycho-power. You make one wrong move, and I'll give you a psycho-command to throw yourself in front of an auto. It would look just like a traffic accident."

"I'll do what you say," Arnold Wayne answered hastily. "Don't make me commit suicide, please!"

Padgett smiled fiercely. "You keep a few steps ahead of me, so I can turn the power on at any moment."

When the two men entered the police building, with Arnold Wayne nervously leading, a cry went up.

"Grab that guy. It's Padgett, the Magic Brain guy!"

Policemen seemed to swarm from all sides, yelling as they grabbed Padgett.

"Don't let him use his psycho-stuff on you! Get handcuffs! Lock the doors!"

"Take it easy," snapped Padgett. "I walked in here of my own free will, didn't I? I want to see the commissioner."

"Thought you'd use your psycho-stuff on the commissioner, eh?" rasped the captain. "Bring him along, boys—this other fellow, too. Let him have it if he starts to use the psycho-business."

Padgett was hustled with Wayne to the commissioner's office. Commissioner Landon leaped up, his massive face grim but worried.

"So they finally got you!" he barked at Padgett. "You're going to prison for a long time."

"What prison will be able to hold this guy with his psycho-power?" one officer asked doubtfully.

"They'll find a way to hold him in Sing Sing," Landon stated. "Even if they have to keep him in chains."

"Listen to me," Padgett said loudly. "I'm not the guilty one. Arnold Wayne is. All those things I did, he forced me to do, by kidnaping my girl and holding her as a hostage. Here's definite proof of it—the campaign-crime he planned, in his own writing."

LANDON read the sheet that Padgett thrust at him. He looked surprised as he raised his eyes to Wayne.

"What about this?" he demanded. "If this proves to be your handwriting—"

"Padgett forced me to write that," Wayne said coolly. "He's trying to make me take the blame for all his crimes."

"I'm telling the truth!" Padgett declared angrily to the commissioner. "Wayne made me get that two million dollars from O. L. Morrow. He sold stocks short and cleaned up. A search of his broker's records and of Wayne's safe-deposit box will prove it. And the thugs he had kidnap my girl are tied up at three-forty-five Flower Street right now."

"We'll soon find out about all this," Landon said. He gave sharp orders, then turned to Padgett and Wayne. "You'll wait right here."

Screaming sirens, twenty minutes later, proclaimed the return of police cars that had been sent on the commissioner's errand. Blue-coated officers and men began to enter, and with one party of them came Helen Gray. The young girl sprang eagerly to Padgett.

"Walter, are you all right?" she cried anxiously. "Did you get the evidence from Wayne?"

"Sure, it was easy," Padgett said nonchalantly. "I didn't even have to use my psycho-power to do it."

Landon was receiving curt reports from his officers. When they finished, he looked grimly at Arnold Wayne.

"Padgett's story checks, Wayne. The money taken from Morrow has been traced to your brokerage account. And what's more, my men found your pals Brower and Harris in a pretty groggy condition at your apartment. Brower was wounded, and he talked. So you were going to use Padgett's psycho-power to take over the city, eh? You were going to have Brower replace me as Commissioner?"

Wayne shrugged. "What do you expect me to do—break down and make a confession? I demand a lawyer."

"Twenty lawyers won't do you much good with all the evidence against you," Landon predicted. "Take him out, boys."

When Arnold Wayne had been removed, Padgett smiled at the commissioner.

"Is there any charge against me now?"

Landon frowned. "I guess not. There doesn't seem to be much doubt that you were forced into crime. But I still hate to think of a man with this psycho-power of yours running loose in New York."

Padgett laughed quite smugly.

"Don't worry about that, Commissioner. I won't be using the power from now on. I've found I don't really need it."

Doctor Keys, the medical examiner, twitched eagerly at Padgett's sleeve.

"Would you mind if we made an X-ray of your skull, Mr. Padgett?" he begged. "A picture of that projector and its connections to your brain might reveal wonderful clues to science."

"Oh, all right," Padgett said boredly. "But make it fast. Helen and I want to get out of here."

HE followed the physician into the laboratory and submitted to the X-ray. When he returned a few minutes later to the commissioner's office, he stiffened at sight of a man waiting there.

It was a square-faced, aggressive, loud-voiced man—Brockway, his office-superintendent at the insurance company!

"I came down to identify Padgett, when I heard you'd captured him," Brockway was saying to the commissioner. "He was one of my clerks."

"He's cleared himself," Landon grunted. "There he is."

Brockway swung around. When saw Padgett, he frowned sternly.

"Well, Padgett, I don't know whether I can take you back after all this publicity—" Padgett uttered a loud, derisive noise.

"Don't make me laugh, Brockway. You know damned well I'm the best worker you've got and you couldn't get along without me."

Brockway stared at him unbelievably.

"You've changed a lot in two days," he muttered.

"I'll say I've changed! With my psycho-power, I don't need to cringe to anybody. As a matter of fact, I'm not coming back to the office unless I get the raise I'm entitled to. What about it?"

Brockway tried to bluster.

"Why, look here, you can't talk to me that way. You're a good worker, I'll admit, but—"

"Do I get that raise?" Padgett demanded. "If not, I quit right here and now. There are plenty of other jobs for a man with my powers."

"Well, I must admit you've really earned a raise by your work," Brockway temporized. "We'll fix it up in the morning."

"Okay, I'll see you then," Padgett said casually. "Come along, Helen."

When they were out in the dark street, he turned to the girl firmly.

"And now what about us, Helen?"

"Why—what do you mean?" Helen stammered, her dark eyes wide.

"You know what I mean. You know I've been crazy about you from the first. But I'm tired of hanging around and being treated like a puppy. If you care for me as much as I hope you do, we're getting married tomorrow. If not, I'm walking out and you're not going to see me again."

"This psycho-power of yours has made you almost a bully, Walter," she complained. "But—but I don't want you to walk out."

PADGETT was kissing her for the third time when he felt a familiar tug at his sleeve. It was Doctor Keys, the medical examiner.

"What are you bothering me for now?" Padgett demanded in annoyance.

The physician waved an X-ray plate in front of their eyes.

"Mr. Padgett, look!" he gasped. "That X-ray I just made of your skull—it doesn't show any psycho-projector inside your head!"

"You're crazy!" Padgett blurted. "The projector must still be in my head, or I wouldn't have the psycho-power."

"Are you sure you still have it?" Doctor Keys asked.

"Why, of course. I'll prove it to you." He shot a thought-command at the doctor. "Stand on your head!"

To Padgett's utter amazement, the physician did not obey. He stood completely unaffected, leaning forward anxiously.

He shot a thought-command at Helen. But when she did not obey, an amazing realization came to Padgett.

"Why, I don't have the psycho-power any more!" he exclaimed. "Somehow, the projector was removed by somebody without my knowing it. It must have been when we were taking a rest down in that loft. I know I had the power up till then."

"But how could the projector be taken from you, Walter?" Helen asked wonderingly. "You said nobody but the Vegan could remove it without killing you."

"By Heaven, it was the Vegan who took the projector from me!" Padgett yelled. "I remember that I woke up from a vague dream of someone monkeying with my head. That's what it was! The Vegan wanted me to give up the psycho-power for my own good, but I wouldn't. So, before leaving Earth, the Vegan put us to sleep some way and took the projector from me. It didn't want to depart and leave me with the power, for fear it would lead me into disaster."

HELEN stared at him without comprehension.

"But if you didn't have the psycho-power since then, how did you force Wayne to clear you—and domineer Brockway into giving you a raise—and make me agree to marry you?"

Padgett was dazed. As he looked into her eyes, his face grew awed.

"Why, I did do all that without the psycho-power, didn't I? I guess it shows that I've developed my natural will-power, as the Vegan said I could. I'm glad now that he took the projector from me. I'll never need it again. Old 'Human Zero' Padgett is gone for good."

He glanced up happily at the bright blue spark of Vega, twinkling in the summer sky.

"Thanks to you, pal," he breathed gratefully. "Thanks to you!"

IN NEXT ISSUE'S SCIENTIFICTION NOVEL SECTION

REMEMBER TOMORROW

A Complete Novel of the Future

By HENRY KUTTNER

The Reader Speaks



"VIA" READERS' LETTERS

By D. B. Thompson

Last month, when I read the line-up of stories for October, I was certain that this would be a banner issue. And I was right. Part of this is due to Manly Wade Wellman's fine novel, "The Worlds of Tomorrow," but not all. "Waters of Wrath," "Via Mercury," and "One Way Star Ride" all merit top billing. "Colossus from Space" carries on the series of stories about giants coming to the aid of mankind very satisfactorily. "Upward Bound" is definitely new, both in setting and treatment. The body of the victim in "Murders Asteroid" probably would not have followed the space ship when the latter accelerated, but there is a neat bit of poetic justice in this short story. Seems to me that Pete Manx's flair for showmanship fairs a little better in historic times than in prehistoric, but he is amusing everywhere.

Bergey has another satisfactory cover, if for no other reason than the almost-natural green sky. If we can't have a blue sky, I'll take green in preference to red or yellow. But the cover is good in other respects, too. However, I would like to see less printing on the cover; or, failing that, have the printing concentrated in a strip or box.

Paul has a fine illustration for Barnes' story; he is at his best on great machines, or space ships, or strange monsters. The interior illustration for "Colossus of Space" is also good.

I think Carl H. Anderson's point about the cramping effect of the rather short novels is well taken, although it can't very well be remedied, unless two or three short stories are eliminated, and I don't favor that remedy. Manly Wade Wellman's consistent pictures of the worlds of the future are all to the good, "petal-pussed Martians" and all. It is rather like meeting old friends to meet these same intelligent life forms in all his stories.

It begins to appear that I am about the only regular reader who doesn't rate the "Anton York" series among the best of your generally good, and often excellent novels. Guess I'm just plain, ornery, stubborn; because I still think that only "Race Around the Moon" was less interesting than Binder's epics.

Well, I will probably be back as soon as the next report from "Mercury Expedition No. 1" reaches me, via TWS.—3136 Q Street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

FAN FEUDS

By Carl H. Anderson

Anderson bows his head in abject apology. In the intensity of my passion in the August READER SPEAKS I made passing mention of feuds, and received prompt literary decapitation at the hands of Nebraska's Thompson.

In this department we shall publish your opinions every month. After all, this is YOUR magazine, and it is edited for YOU. If a story in THRILLING WONDER STORIES fails to click with you, it is up to you to let us know about it. We welcome your letters whether they are complimentary or critical—or contain good old-fashioned brickbats! Write regularly! As many of your letters as possible will be printed herein. We cannot undertake to enter into private correspondence.

All a misunderstanding, I assure you.

Instead of the trite, out-moded type of letter where the participants castigate each other for everything from how they play a hand of bridge to why Socialism doesn't work, I meant the normal, healthy give-and-take of fan opinion. Anything to jolt the readers out of their routine blather.

Feuds, in the sense that Thompson means, are as insipid and boring to the non-combatant as anything in a blatt-column could be. After all, the columns are for the fans, and I have always been convinced that a fan is a fellow who reads imaginative fiction because he likes it, not because it affords an ideal opportunity to smear somebody else's ideas for mere notoriety.

Rest assured, too, that no matter how much back-biting yours truly does, it will not be launched with the idea of starting a feud. I invite criticism and discussion of my own opinions and commend DBT for his immediate and spirited response to a topic that I left a bit obscure to say the least.

There is one thing that I will not be obscure upon, however, and here we go.

The covers still dissatisfy; after all, Bergey is essentially no different from Brown, and therefore no better. His people are more human, but his choice of material—if he has anything to say in the choice—is as corny as Brown's ever was. I say "Pecans to him."

I liked Hildy's tribute to Paul. A single, good Paul illustration can make a mediocre issue good and a good issue grand. And his true medium is still the outer jacket.

And just what is there about Williams? An odd sort of pathos—when he controls it, as he did not in "The Eternal Light"—that can't be matched by anybody in the field. I will always remember something by him called "Robot's Return."

Did anybody ever see so many bell-ringing errors condensed into two pages as can be found in "Murder Asteroid"? Isaac Newton is probably doing cartwheels in his sepulcher after what HAMILTON did to the law of gravitation.

Winced-of-the-month is Evans' crab-story. It resembled rather closely the style of one of your less competent amateurs, the chap from Hawaii, I believe. Evans' blithe mixture of Meritlan lingo and contemporary vernacular had me shrieking.

I'm glad to see that Ley is doing an article for you. Make something like this a regular feature. It will do much toward balancing up a rather lop-sided bill-of-fare, contribute an aura of prestige and all that.

October reactions: "Waters of Wrath"—A logical and coherent piece of work.

"One Way Star Ride"—Good yarn. Poor title.

"Colossus from Space"—Yike!

"Man About Time"—Kent is usually swell, but not here.

"Via Mercury"—Giles is giving us classics.

"Murder Asteroid"—(!)

"Upward Bound"—(!)

"The Worlds of Tomorrow"—Average.

What made it sound so much like Hamilton?

"The Reader Speaks"—Better again. I hope

I don't have to chastise you again about it.—Hotel Alhambra, Charlevoix, Michigan.

THAT PYRAMID PUZZLE AGAIN

By Avery Hevesh

This fellow Bergey is o.k. Every one of his last few cover illustrations for T.W.S. and Startling Stories has been swell. Can he do

interior illustrations? If so, I would like to see what he looks like in the inside of the mag.

Your feature novel, "Worlds of Tomorrow," was quite good, although it seemed a bit too short. In the past I have noticed that your feature stories have been longer and even if it is necessary to leave out one or two short stories I think it would be better to make your present novels longer.

"Colossus from Space" and "Waters of Wrath" were very interesting. That's a pretty good idea back of Barnes' story. Possibly in the future the cold wastes of upper Canada and the Arctic regions will actually be thawed out through some means to divert the Gulf Stream.

The "Vis" series has me on edge. I'm still waiting to find out the secret and the purposes for the existence of pyramids on Mars, Venus and Mercury.

Incidentally, what is the meaning of SETPOBEMTOSCFP??? I come across this term every now and then in the reader's department. Why don't you maintain a special service dept. to explain such terms to us ignorant fellows? ... It's enough to get a guy nuts!

I'd like to close asking ... where is Schomburg? I consider him your best interior artist and I wonder why you don't use him more often. 280 Crown St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

(The initials perplex you. They stand for "Society for the Prevention of Bug-Eyed Monsters on the Covers of Science Fiction Publications." O.K.?—Ed.)

A COLOSSAL FLAW

By Louis Grus

This is my first letter to you. I have been putting off the idea of writing a letter to you for two months. That is how long I have been reading science fiction.

The idea of the Dust Bowl spreading so much that it reached from Rocky to Appalachian Mountains as stated in "Waters of Wrath" sounds very impossible, but the story was good.

I'd like to know if the colossus from space brought a trunkful of clothes along with him. On the cover he has a tunic without sleeves while in the illustration accompanying the story he has one with sleeves. The helmets are shaped different. He must have a different belt for different occasions too because on the cover his belt has one large stud while in the other picture it has one large stud surrounded by smaller ones. The latter one is correct because it says so in the story. Nevertheless, the story was good.

Please have more Pate Manx stories.

As I said before, I am a new reader of science fiction. So far I have read the August, September and October issues of T.W.S. All have giants on the covers. Why not give the natural-sized people a chance to get on?

Carl H. Anderson sure peps this column up. I guess that's enough for now.—49 Erie Street, Bloomfield, New Jersey.

KENT CLICKS

By M. A. Chamberlin

Being a comparatively new fan to science fiction, this is one of the first letters I have written to a magazine of this type. But I've been reading your magazine steadily for a few months. So, after much deliberation about which magazine, in the s-f field, I would pick on every month, I finally picked T.W.S. So I'm writing to tell you about it.

And since I happen to have the October and September issues right here in front of me, I guess I'll do a little criticizing and commenting.

To be straight and honest, I disliked the September cover, and also the illustration inside accompanying "The Stolen Spectrum." The large red creatures are too ridiculous for the swell story. But Friend's yarn doesn't get my number one vote.

"I really think I've found an author I like in Kelvin Kent. And "Comedy of Bras" just hit the spot with me. So I'll say I think it's the best story in the issue.

"The Stolen Spectrum" rates second in spite of its illustrations, for, I might add, it's the

story that really counts.

I always do enjoy Ed Hamilton's shorts, so "The Night the World Ended" takes third place.

I don't quite think "The Tyrant of Mars" lives up to Kummer's usual work. But he's one of my standing favorites anyway. This yarn is fourth.

Jameson's good. I don't always like him, but most of his things stand out. I was sorry to give "Prospectors of Space" a fifth rating, but the other stories were so good—

I haven't read much of Ray Cummings, but what I read I didn't like. And "The Vanishing Men" wasn't so hot.

"West Point of Tomorrow" did not stand up to your usual good novels. It wasn't exactly what I'd call a complete novel. It wasn't particularly interesting. Nope. But I'll tell you right now, I do like your novels as a rule. It's only once in a while that one rings sour, like Burks' did. That's one reason I picked T.W.S. as my favorite s-f mag. I love science fiction novels, in fact it is my ambition some time to write one myself. So I'll interrupt right here to tell you, I'm bent on entering your amateur contest. Expect your contest editor to be flooded any week now with some of my "masterpieces."

In my opinion, you could have left out Sheridan's "Formula for Life" and had a better magazine.

But on the other hand, the October cover is tops!

I was a little disappointed this time with K. Kent and my friend Mr. Manx.

The novel rated number one in this issue. It was swell. I'd like to see more of M. W. Wellman. He really hits the spot.

"Waters of Wrath" was very good. It almost ties with the novel, but not quite. So I'll give it a number two rating.

"Man About Time" cops third place. It's quite amusing, but not exactly up to the other Kent yarns. Manx has some pretty good ideas, even though some of them flop miserably.

Mercury expedition No. 1 has suddenly struck my fancy. And so "Via Mercury" has so roused my curiosity to read "Via Catacombs," for which I am patiently waiting. Giles is quite new to me.

Williams and Hamilton tie this time. Both yarns are equally entertaining, however. I must admit Mr. Williams is strictly taboo to me. I dislike most of his stories strongly. I was surprised to see a fairly good one bearing his name this time.

Gerald Evans got slightly original in "Upward Bound." Most plots are just the other way around. Both his and "Colossus from Space" rate sixth. Johnson had something there, but he didn't do enough with it.

Even though I do rate "Stick to Fiction" on every T.W.S. science quiz I take, I still keep plugging. But one thing is, I am sticking to fiction. As the months go on, I'll probably get a higher percentage, I should hope.

I must also add that I think T.W.S. has swell departments. More and better than other rival mags. So I'll stick to T.W.S. until I turn to a different form of literature. Which won't be soon, if I can help it.—17641 Larchwood Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

SEE THIS MONTH'S COVER!

By Charles Hidley

The Bergey cover is a very vast improvement over last month's, that did taking ninth place in a poll of the nine stf-covers issued in the month of July. If you can get a muscular frame like that wholesale—I want one for Christmas. I wonder if the many readers realize that since the October, 1938, issue there have been only three out of eighteen covers without a giant of some kind—men, ants, dyes, dinosaurs, "alien beings," sea monsters, etc.

Why not drop this juvenile trait and give us some scientific art work for a change? While still on covers I pause to wonder if Bergey has merely taken over the cover-monopoly from Mr. Brown—the last two covers on each of the three Standard stf "companions"—6 in all—seem to hint pretty broadly at just that. How about Paul, Morey, Wesso? I thought Anderson's wordy and lengthy explosion both an anti-climax and silly.

I have "Waters of Wrath," by Barnes, down as my No. 3 yarn in October, because the basic idea was interesting and the science—though obvious—was pretty good. The majority of the readers will rate this much higher; I wanted to make it the last. The recent trend in sci-fic tales to make very radical social upheavals both popular and acceptable has been quite offensive to me—or perhaps I'm too narrow to see such revolutionary points of view. In brief—I did not appreciate W of W, and the trite and very unbelievable ending only added to disgust.

"One Way Star Ride" is No. 6 with a fair Morey pic that would have been better if not hacked to pieces, and framed. I still pray for full-paged, framed pics as of yore, with only the caption as a trace of printing on the same page. The Johnson "Colossus from Space" is seventh, for it was merely a reversal of the old Cummings atom theme. Murphy is good—but not as much as the readers rave.

I'll never tire of Pete Manx! His first nov-
elet is fourth, and though his mishaps in the Stone Age were not as good as others, still the humor was very prevalent and his charming personality forces me to ask for more adventures.

It's a good idea to have the installments of the new "Via" series close together, and I am in a dither to continue the Mercury jaunt next month. The Wesso illustration for it shares first place with Paul's "Upward Bound" this issue, and I only wonder why Mr. W does not do all his work thusly.—New York, N. Y.

PAUL CASTS NO PALL

By Alfred E. Maxwell

Pardon me while I "boo" a certain Mr. Wallace Buchholz. His statement that Paul is one of the worst artists in the s-f field is untrue. In fact, Paul is the best illustrator. Mr. Buchholz's idea is a direct contradiction to the opinion of the rest of the fans. They voted Paul their favorite artist by an overwhelming majority. For further proof that he's good, take a gander at his picture for "Waters of Wrath" and his cut for "Upward Bound."

I might as well go on and comment on the October issue. That cover! Wow! Watch the praise you get for this one! Colorful—attractive—scientific—and no bug-eyed monsters! There was a certain stiffness to Bergey's first tries, but if he keeps them coming like that one, I take him!

As to the stories, I found them very good. The worst was Hamilton's "Murder Asteroid," and even that was good. An absorbing short-short. More of this type.

The rest ranked as follows:

(1) "Worlds of Tomorrow." (2) "Man About Time."—Mr. Manx triumphs again! (3) "Waters of Wrath"—A powerfully written tale. (4) "Colossus from Space."—More by Johnson! (5) "Via Mercury."—I hope he keeps them all this good. Glad to see he didn't kill off half of them this time. (6) "Upward Bound."—A "different" tale. (7) "One Way Star Ride."—good. Very interesting, as always when they're by Williams. More of "Ed." (8) "Murder Asteroid."

I notice you have eight yarns per issue, now. Keep it up! Quantity is next to quality, and you've sure got quality!—545 East Madison St., Opelousas, Louisiana.

NEW COVER ARTIST NEXT ISSUE!

By J. J. Fortier

Having not written to you for a few issues, I will proceed to elaborate upon certain points. All taken into consideration, this last ish was the best I have seen for some time.

Let's take art work first. Your covers have improved magnificently. Not for some time has Wonder featured such fine covers. I hope to see much more of Bergey. He has Brown beat on all scores. If you have any more hidden in the sack, draw them forth. Couldn't you use a bit less wording on your cover though. You do have a contents page on which the stories should be listed you know. I like this Murphy. He's grand. And keep

(Concluded on page 119)

STAY a wage-slave IF you wish BUT-

DON'T you wish you were like some of your friends who are forging ahead while you stay put? Like it or not, people size you up by what you earn. Is their sizing flattering to you?—Why not *plan* to get ahead, to make more money, to get a raise? If you don't know how, perhaps we can aid you as we have so many others. Chances are good that we can help you *boost yourself up* in ways you never thought of. —Thousands will gladly tell you how our planned training helped them—directed their work along *charted* paths to business success, bigger earnings, 10%, 20%, 50%, some even 100% and 200% greater income... At any rate, let us send you the inspiring book "Ten Years' Promotion in One." It's FREE! It will surely help you *plan* your next raise whether you ask us to *help* you plan or not. Write us today for the book—the coupon is for your convenience.

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WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

(Continued from page 90)

"My Gawd, Perfessor," he exclaimed. "That Xenenonite almost tricked me. This is the wrong lever!"

"Wrong lever?" the Professor echoed. "How could it be? He said left-hand lever for the repulsive force."

"But the machine was upside down on Xenenon!" Tubby explained. "The left-hand lever there is the right-hand one here! And that Xenenonite knew it!"

What a narrow escape! The sky to the east now was swiftly glowing. Tubby jumped for the right-hand lever; pulled it a little as the Sun came up.

"Is it workin' okay, Perfessor?"

"Yes—yes, Tubby!"

The repulsive force was on. But at this lowest intensity it would take days. "I'll shove her on full," Tubby muttered. "Why be a piker?"

"No! Oh my God, no!" the Professor gasped. But Tubby didn't hear him. With a great heave, he shoved the lever clear over. It worked! Gigantic, stupendous repulsion! The crawling motion of the sun suddenly stopped dead. The axial rotation of the Earth abruptly was completely halted!

Tubby was conscious of a great surging, forward movement. The desert and the mountain seemed to slide away as he and the Professor were hurled eastward and upward. Where was the Professor? In a second Tubby couldn't see him. The air was full of flying things now. Where was the ground? It seemed for a second that he could see it dwindling far below—the curving surface of Earth with clouds of wreckage hurtling up from it—huge cities and everything in them torn away, hurtling off into space. . . .

And now the Earth itself was gone. Tubby was a satellite, forever to re-

volve with a balancing of forces in his new, destined orbit. . . .

"HEY, quit it! Stop shovin' me!" Was that Jake's voice? Was Jake here, a satellite among the stars?

He could feel Jake pulling at him; nudging him.

"Hey, Tubby, sit up!" Jake's voice whispered. "Stop fallin' on me."

"Shut up," the voice of the second man said, in a tense whisper. "Yer makin' too much noise. Listen to what he's sayin'—he's a scientific lecturer—he knows what he's talkin' about."

In the hot dim auditorium Tubby sat up and blinked owl-eyed at the platform where the lecturer stood with his little turn-table gadget.

"Now I've already explained and shown," the lecturer was saying, "how if the Earth's axial rotation should be speeded up, centrifugal force eventually would hurl us into space. I will now demonstrate the opposite condition that I spoke to you about before—the other force that brings the same result. Let me demonstrate."

He put the little pill-box on the turn-table, and slowly rotated it. The pill-box stayed put.

"Now that's a normal rotation," the lecturer said. "But suppose, for instance, that the axial rotation of the Earth should be checked too suddenly. We'd get the same result as by speeding it up! Just watch."

His hand gripped the turn-table and abruptly stopped it. The pill-box kept on going; it hit the platform floor and all its little pills came out and kept on going.

"And that's Inertia!" the lecturer finished triumphantly.

"He's right," Tubby muttered. "He certainly is right!"

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STRANGE STORIES

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THE READER SPEAKS (Concluded from page 117)

featuring Paul. Wesso slipped a bit this time, unless he did the illustrations for the novel, which I suspect he did. They were the ish's best work.

Let's dig into the meat of the mag now. The stories, I mean. Strangely enough, Kent took laurels over the novel this time. I don't mean to say that I didn't like the novel. I did for it was a fine job, but Kelvin just has one of the finest series ever presented to a bunch of hungry stfana. You might rate Barnes' outstandingly good piece and Wellman's novel a tie. Cut MWW's down or raise the length of the other and I believe that Art would've had the edge over Manly.

Something that makes me very sad is the fact that many topnotchers have been missing from your pages. Give Kuttner a new chance, as I hear he is improving. How about a stab at E. E. Smith? And the old master, Edgar Rice Burroughs? Then there is L. Ron Hubbard, Jack Williamson, Nat Schachner, & L. Sprague de Camp.

As to departments, why not enlarge The Reader Speaks? And put a little news in the SFL News section.

Hoping for many happy anniversaries.—Oakland, Calif.

(Kuttner in next issue—with a novel, Williamson coming soon.—Ed.)

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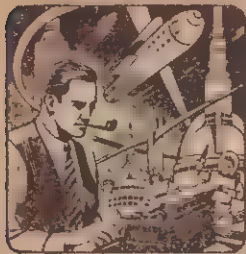
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The Story Behind the Story

DID you know that scientifiction has a history—a family tree that dates all the way back to antiquity? Fantasy literature begins as long ago as Socrates' day. And we can prove it!

Aristophanes' play, "The Clouds," written at that time, which takes place in an alchemist's laboratory, merits the distinction of being the first fantasy work ever produced.

The first interplanetary story? Well, the earliest account on record of a trip to the Moon was portrayed in 180 A. D. by the most brilliant representative of the revived Greek literature under the Roman Empire, and one of the world's greatest wits—Lucian of Samosata. Maybe he did it without rockets, but you'll find his account of a trip to the lunar orb in his book, "The True History."

Next we come to Dante Alighieri, (1265-1321). Dante, the great Italian poet, had an extensive education in the science, Ptolemaic astronomy, etc. In his fantasy, "Inferno," he utilized his knowledge to present his conception of the Earth's molten core. Then there's Leonardo Da Vinci, the Edison of the Middle Ages. In his work, "Opus Majus," the seer forecast the telescope, the airplane, the parachute, the steam engine, the chain drive, and many other inventions.

These men, along with Bergerac, Dean Swift, Francis Godwin, and John Wilkins, are the pioneer science-fictionists. They paved the way for Flammarion, Verne, Poe and Wells.

And now for a bombshell! Literary commentators, in studying the history of scientifiction, declare that two of the most obvious sources of fantasy literature have as yet received no recognition. They'll tell you that you can trace the pseudo-science tale back to the Arabian Nights, and to fairy tales!

According to the commentators, the aforementioned classifications of literature must be included within the realm of fantasy literature because they require and intensify the imagination and evoke curiosity. Here and there, scattered throughout such fiction, we do find a smattering of prophecy which has since been realized.

The magic carpet is explained today as "nullification of gravity." Invisibility cloaks of the fairy tale are still the favorite fodder of many authors. The potions and elixirs of the Arabian Nights are made use of in stories today, but with scientific trimmings.

Naturally, we're not saying that science fiction of today falls in the same category as the fairy tale. But it is interesting to note the common derivation of all imaginative literature. Won't some enterprising reader

tabulate the phenomena listed in ye Green, Red, Yellow, etc. fairy books and compare them with the wonders displayed in our stories? We'll be glad to publish the findings.

THE MAN WITH THE MAGIC BRAIN

REMEMBER the stories of the fairy who offered the prince one wish, in payment for a good deed? Edmond Hamilton has taken this pattern, and used it as the basis for one of the most absorbing scientifiction novels we have ever seen. (Which proves our point, incidentally.)

A visitor from the stars is saved from destruction by an Earthman. In gratitude, the celestial visitor offers to give the Earthman any scientific power he demands. The Earthman chooses. . . . But we're getting ahead of Hamilton. He can tell you the how-when-why-and-where more capably. Tune in on the basis for **GIFT FROM THE STARS**:

GIFT FROM THE STARS had its beginning on a warm summer evening when I was walking in Central Park with two friends, one of whom is a member of the editorial staff of **THRILLING WONDER STORIES**.

He said suddenly, "Suppose a super-being came down from the stars, landed in front of us, and offered to grant any wish we asked. What would you ask for?"

That seemed an easy question at first. But think it over, and you'll find as we did, that it's hard to make up your mind just what you would ask for. We thought of invisibility, the secret of atomic power, the power to change base metals to gold, and a lot of others, but still weren't sure that that's just what we would want.

"I believe there might be a good science-fiction story in this," he declared. "Why don't you think about it?"

Well, a few days later it happened to recur to my mind. I was walking down Broadway and it amused me to think of the various incredible tricks I could play on all this passing throng of people if I somehow had the way to impose a remote-control of their actions, against their will.

It suddenly occurred to me, "That's what I'd ask for if I could be granted my wish—the power to make everybody do just what I wanted them to do."

It didn't seem entirely impossible, either. In the first place, people do control other people against their will quite often. We call it dominating character, strong will-power, or even hypnotism in extreme cases. But whatever we call it, we don't really know just why it is that some people can utterly dominate others.

Suppose, I wondered, that it's due to some power of the brain of which our psychological science knows little or nothing as yet? And suppose that some people just happened to be born with more of that latent power, or managed to develop it?

But, if that was so, how does such a power operate? There must be some tangible me-

dium through which it works. The only logical answer, it seemed to me, was that a "dominating" person's brain actually projected electromagnetic or similar vibrations that reached and affected the brain of the victim or subject.

Therefore, it seemed plausible that if some way were found to amplify and project that will or thought-command vibration by mechanical means, the possessor of such a device would be able to impose his will on everyone he met.

But there was a catch to it, I saw, as there is to most alluring things. Such a person would only be able to dominate people while they were within the range of his mechanical thought-command projector. As soon as they got out of range, and out of his influence, his troubles would begin to mount up.

Right there, I began to see the whole story. I wrote it without much real change in plan from that first idea. And I hope you readers enjoy it.

ATOMIC WARFARE

CAN a planet millions of miles away invade Earth via remote control? Certainly, the vast gulf of ether separating us from all our solar neighbors seems good enough protection. Yes, simple scientific strategy wouldn't be enough to turn the tide for an interplanetary opponent bent on the conquest of Earth.

But there is one force hitherto avoided in sciencefiction stories that a warring world would employ—fifth column tactics!

In his novelet, **THE GOLDEN BARRIER**, G. T. Fleming-Roberts, a writer new to the pages of **THRILLING WONDER STORIES**, but famous for his distinctive mystery stories in our companion magazines, shows us dramatically how a fifth-column betrayal can help span the void with blitzkrieg efforts. Judging from Mr. Roberts' letter, the present European crisis had a lot to do with the genesis of his story.

I suppose the present European conflict influenced the writing of **THE GOLDEN BARRIER** more than anything else. To me the strangest aspect of this war is the role which science has taken. We have on one side England, representing the old economic order. On the other side, Germany represents a new order—and one in which science places a greater part than the hysterical oratory of Mr. Hitler.

I believe it was Columnist Boake Carter who claimed that six scientists were backing Germany's part in the war. Curiously enough, not all of these were Germans. So we have on one hand England, who through the old economic order can purchase her war materials; while Germany, acting through science, must create synthetics to take the place of materials which the present economic structure of Germany will not permit her to buy.

That, I believe, is the underlying idea of **THE GOLDEN BARRIER**. Do not suppose that the author for one moment assumes the precarious role of prophet. Rather, he asks, for the purpose of this story, the reader to suppose that science with its synthetics is triumphant in this war. Will not the present economic structure of the world be changed by such a victory? Is not gold, after all, a comparatively useless element as compared with carbon? And will not utility, rather than scarcity, govern a new standard of values one of these days, regardless of the outcome of this or any war?

I leave the answer to these questions to the readers of **THRILLING WONDER STORIES** who have taken their maiden voyages on time machines across the space-time spirals long before this writer had cut his teeth in other realms of fiction writing.

Regardless of the answers, we have a parallel situation in **THE GOLDEN BARRIER**. We have a new Earth, where utility forms the basis of economics, against Venus, no less ad-

(Continued on page 122)

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(Continued from page 121)

vanced in science, yet clinging to the old economic order. With science bridging the gaps between planets, why shouldn't this economic difference in planets account for strife within the Solar System, just as between countries and continents today?

At any rate, I was thinking along such lines when the plot of THE GOLDEN BARRIER broke from my subconscious.

EARTH-BOUND

MERCURY Expedition Number 1 signs off in this issue, with Operator Gillway's etherline report of VIA INTELLIGENCE safely transmitted.

And so we bid farewell to the pioneer explorers of tomorrow, the daring Columbases of space, as they return to Earth. They've seen three new worlds thus far—and conquered them all. But the enigma of the pyramids still remains, a mystery more perplexing than any other phenomena known to science.

We'll be resuming contact soon with Gillway on his next "Via" jaunt, which will bring you nearer to the secret of the pyramids. The locale? Well, Gordon A. Giles has two in mind. The mighty planet Jupiter. Or the asteroid belt. Take your choice. In the meanwhile, here's the author's tentative swan-song:

I hope the vegetable-minds in the last story of the series, VIA CATABOMBS, intrigued you enough to want to hear more of them. They play a large part in this story. I had to go a little off the deep end in philosophy, but this is in keeping with the "Via" policy of realism. After all, it's the shadowy thoughts and motivations behind us that make life, not the concrete 2 plus 2 things.

Empires rise and fall. The empire of the dinosaurs, and of sub-men, and then all the empires of man's history on Earth. Out in the Solar System, the Mercurians, first intelligent race, built an empire, only a memory now in the minds of 123 survivors. The Martians rose next, building their strange pyramids on the planets. They are gone, and now man goes forth to conquer the space-ways. How long will the cycle go on? Where will it end?

Such might be the history of the Solar System, past and future. At least that's the imaginary basis the "Via" stories are built around.

Omega, by the way, isn't really a philosopher at all. Philosophy is seeing something behind things. Omega saw nothing behind things. Therefore he is the most pitiful of creatures, with all the future a gray blank to him. I think I killed him out of kindness.

Or, there's another way to look at it—that Omega's philosophy was so advanced that we couldn't conceive of it in any terms we know. Perhaps he had enjoyed his life in his own way, as a vegetable. Something must have intrigued him and kept his mind alive, for a million years, or he would have chosen death sooner. We can't picture what it is, naturally. We would have to evolve to that stage. Just as the worm will have to evolve to our stage to know why it gives us pleasure to read little black markings on paper, like this.

What! Is it possible that the secret of the pyramids hasn't been solved yet? Perhaps the answer lies on Jupiter, or the asteroids—if the editor's listening! If the series happens to go on, I think there will be more to say about the Mercurian plant-minds, as well as Martian pyramids.

Via Expedition Number Three signing off.

METAL MEN

WHAT are the chances of a Machine Age—a machine age literally run by men of metal?

Manly Wade Wellman gives you the

answer in his novelet, **THE LIFE MACHINES**, which story, incidentally, wins this month's cover.

You'll find that it's men against machines, and machines against men, until both learn that the real Machine Age is one of hearts and iron molten into one.

No seasoned reader of science fiction will think the idea of a machine-governed world new. Yet I doubt if the idea has been exhausted. It is in Butler's **EREWON**, written in 1872, that a thought both intriguing and forbidding occurs: "The present machines are to the future as the early Saurians to man. . . ." Mulling it over, I got an idea of mechanical evolution that would develop an independent life-form when man, the Earth's present unhandy ruler, would be gone.

But I am no great admirer of the machine age. I doubt if machines will do any better than men. In fact, I imagine that the clockwork mind will have its limitations, even as the flesh-and-blood mind. But couldn't the two minds offer each other something? Might not man and machine succeed as comrades where either one, alone, is pretty well booked to fail?

That's what is back of **THE LIFE MACHINES**.

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Type or hand-print clearly in submitting announcements. **THRILLING WONDER STORIES** will not be responsible for losses sustained. Make plain just what you have and what you want to "swap" it for. Enclose a clipping of this announcement with your request. Address **Swap Column, THRILLING WONDER STORIES, 22 West 48th Street, New York, N. Y.**

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Will swap 50 foreign stamps for the same amount of old United States stamps. Send to A. E. Hildebrandt, R. F. D. 1, Framingham, Massachusetts.

Trade better stamps—stamp for stamp or on Scott Catalogue. Irving Kob, 174 Grand Street Extension, Brooklyn, New York.

Will swap stamps, pamphlets, World War cards, 2 No. 6 dry cell batteries, small electric motor for photography or chemistry apparatus or pup tent. George Ohanian, 714 Park Street, Hartford, Connecticut.

Swap two 5 meter transceivers complete with phones, mikes, various coils, heavy cabinets, etc. For good camera. Interested in anything. Paul A. Shelton, Box K, Ruogrande City, Texas.

Will trade "Vegaphone" professional tenor banjo, new skin, silver resonator, velvet lined case, for good 9x12 cm. condenser enlarger with F:3.5 lens. Joseph H. Schnall, 72 Grafton Street, Brooklyn, New York.

Send 100 of your duplicate stamps (no German) and I will return 100 of mine. George C. Price, 12 Pleasant Street, Mascota, New York.

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Have hand printing press, accessories, etc. Want new symphonic recordings. Write your offers first. R. Kates, 39 Schuyler, Suite 34, Roxbury, Massachusetts.

Trade 1937 Underwood Universal portable typewriter, excellent condition, for motorcycle. Russell Lindholm, Valley, Nebraska.

Will exchange skating rink stickers of your collection. Send yours; mine will follow. (Enclose stamp). Pvt. 1st Class R. E. Oberg, PCZD, "A" Port, Worden, Washington, U. S. Army.

Have stamps, New York World's Fair souvenirs and cameras. Want photo-electric or radio set, books and parts, typewriter or microscope. Raphael Farhi, 2881 West 5th Street, Brooklyn, New York.

I have electric razors and cameras for your list. Elmer Cox, Hill Street, Richmond, Kentucky.

Will exchange mounted biological specimens, including butterflies and moths for natural science species of other regions. Frank Stephens, 421 New Jersey Avenue, Brooklyn, New York.

LOOKING FORWARD

(Continued from page 8)

"Je Sais Tout" ("I Know All.")

In every field of endeavor in this mechanized world, animals and insects were there first. The hinge was invented by a spider, the snap-fastener by a bug living on the surface of ponds. The principles upon which airplanes and gyroscopes rest were developed by members of the beetle family.

Moths and wasps have used anesthesia since the dawn of history. Poison gas was invented by the skunk. And there are numerous other precedents in the animal and insect kingdoms as far as invention is concerned!

REAL SCIENTIFUN!

Maybe everything has been done before, but we think the new "What's My Planet" feature in this month's **SCIENCE QUIZ** represents something brand-new in scientific I. Q. tests.

If you're one of the few readers who have shied away from our monthly mental workout department, we advise you to make a stab at the "What's My Planet" feature in this month's collection of scientific stumbers. You'll find it real scientifun, with a dash of mystery thrown in.

PRIZE-WINNING LETTER

PRESENTING—the prize-winning letter in our national contest for the most interesting explanation of Oscar J. Friend's baffling road to nowhere, "The Impossible Highway." Mr. Camden's letter, brief and to the point, brings up every one of the fascinating enigmas posed in Mr. Friend's narrative and discusses them plausibly. His answer, while theoretical, takes cognizance of known scientific facts. We believe you'll find Mr. Camden's solution to be satisfactory on every count.

THE ETERNAL MUSEUM

By Bob Camden

WHEN Dr. Nelson reached the end of The Impossible Highway two questions remained unanswered: Who built the

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road to nowhere—and why? As to who built it, the last plaque on the road tells of Thyroidicus, Plant Man, the final evolution of mammalian life on this planet.” The road could not have been built by present-day man for Thyroidicus is unknown. Nor could it have been built by a form of life higher than this, since spiritual life which is mentioned as “the next step in the stage of evolution”, is yet to appear, according to the plaque. Therefore, the Highway was built by the future inhabitants of Earth, “Thyroidicus.”

Why was it built? Why do we build museums, zoos and libraries? For the edification of the masses, as an aid to science, and for the preservation of knowledge for posterity. The Impossible Highway must have been the museum or perhaps the library of the future.

In “Looking Forward”, in the very same issue of T.W.S. we are told how books and magazines may soon be kept on rolls of tape that record and reproduce spoken words. Why not look even farther ahead to the life-size exhibit replacing the biological textbook?

The story also presents several other interesting problems. If the road was built in the future, how would it be possible for Nelson and Mackensie to walk it today? The fact that the sun remained at the three o'clock position for hours as they traversed the highway offers a partial solution. The road must be in a space-warp where all time ceases to exist. The highway would remain in a state of perfect preservation for eternity!

Where did Thyroidicus get the specimens for the exhibit? Most of them were primitive life-forms found on this planet thousands of years ago. Undoubtedly the builders of the road must have been able to travel in time. And if this is so, then why would two of the cases be empty? The lizard case was empty. Nelson had a lizard of the very same type. The man case was empty. Nelson pushed Mackensie into it. The plaque on that case read “Twentieth Century Man.” Why Twentieth century? Structurally man was the same 5,000 years ago and will be the same for many hundreds of years to come. They must have been allowed to stumble on the road for a purpose. The men of the future then would be able to control the past as well as travel in it.

And finally, were the plants and animals in the cases actually dead? Obviously not, since Nelson placed his hand in the empty case and withdrew it without harm. Mackensie mentioned that the “Universal Life Spores” didn’t even exhibit molecular motion. All molecular motion ceases at absolute zero. Quick freezing does not injure lower life-forms, and scientists are now experimenting with suspended animation for higher life-forms by this same method. A temperature of absolute zero would freeze the plant or animal motionless and at the same time keep it alive indefinitely. Thus, specimens and exhibit would be protected from the ravages of time and preserved forever, the mystery of evolution solved for all future races of mankind.

Announcement Scientifiction Contest Prize Winners!

A TRIO of winners in our recent scientifiction contest! And rare Paul covers and original drawings for the victors!

The big winners, selected from among hundreds of contestants, are hereby congratulated. Contestants were asked to explain the mystery of “The Impossible Highway,” as presented in Oscar J. Friend’s outstanding short story of that name, in our August, 1940, issue.

The prize offered for the most interesting letter was an original cover illustration—by famous artist Frank R. Paul.

Well, the contest is over—and a mighty successful contest it was, judging from the many letters and your enthusiastic reports.

Here’s the list of prize-winners:

FIRST PRIZE

An Original Cover Illustration

By Frank R. Paul

—awarded to Bob Camden, 7357 N. Damen Ave., Chicago, Ill.

SECOND PRIZE

Black-and-White Original Drawings

By A. Schomburg, H. W. Wesso and
M. Marchioni

—awarded to Ray J. Sienkiewicz, 312 East Elm Street, Scranton, Penna.

THIRD PRIZE

An Original Drawing

By Virgil Finlay

—awarded to D. B. Thompson, 3136 Q St., Lincoln, Nebraska.

HONORABLE MENTIONS: E. H. Wells, Ketchikan, Texas; Alfred E. Maxwell, Opelousas, Louisiana; Philip Markoff, New York, N. Y.; Mrs. Robert V. Jones, Saint Louis, Mo.; J. A. Stoke, 345 Gambier St., San Francisco, Calif.; Jean Thomas, 2153 Oak Hill Ave., Youngstown, Ohio; Leroy E. Beeson, Spokane, Washington. Congratulations to the winners—and thanks to all the other contestants for their interesting letters. Watch for our next great scientifiction contest—coming soon!

AMATEUR CONTEST NEWS!

KENNETH L. HARRISON'S short story in this issue, "The Blonde, The Time Machine, and Johnny Bell," is the seventh tale by a brand-new writer presented in **THRILLING WONDER STORIES!**

Honorable mentions for last month's submissions are awarded to: Claude Degler, 217 S. 6th St., Newcastle, Indiana; James Ward, 100 C Street, S.E., Washington, D. C., and Lewis B. Martin, 1258 Race Street, Denver, Colorado.

Our national hunt for new fantasy talent still continues. Why don't you enter our amateur contest? Write up that pet interplanetary tale or time-traveling yarn you've been hoarding all these years, before some other author scoops you on the idea. Type it up, double-spaced, and send it to **AMATEUR WRITER'S EDITOR, THRILLING WONDER STORIES**, 22 W. 48th Street, New York City, N. Y. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the return of your manuscript should it prove unavailable. Prize stories are purchased at the same rates paid our staff contributors.

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HAVE you joined our **SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE**? It's an active, national organization composed of the world's most enthusiastic followers of science fiction—and it fosters that intangible bond between all fantasy fans. Just fill out the coupon.

To obtain a **FREE** certificate of membership, tear off the namestrip of the cover of this magazine, so that the date and title of the magazine show, and send it to **SCIENCE FICTION LEAGUE**, 22 W. 48th St., New York City, N. Y., enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Complete club news, plus a partial list of new members, will appear next issue.

And, readers, write the editor of **THRILLING WONDER STORIES** a regular monthly letter. Tell us which stories you liked best, which are your favorite features and artists. Your suggestions and criticisms have made **T.W.S.** sciencefiction's leading magazine. Help us maintain that leadership. —THE EDITOR.

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Do you feel older than you are or suffer from Getting Up Nights, Backache, Nervousness, Leg Pains, Dizziness, Swollen Ankles, Rheumatic Pains, Burning, scanty or frequent passages? If so, remember that your Kidneys are vital to your health and that those symptoms may be due to non-organic and non-systemic Kidney and Bladder troubles—in such cases **CYSTEX** (a physician's prescription), usually gives prompt and joyous relief by helping the Kidneys flush out poisonous excess acids and wastes. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose in trying **Cystex**. An iron-clad guarantee wrapped around each package assures a refund of your money on return of empty package unless fully satisfied. Don't

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HEADLINERS IN THE NEXT ISSUE

ONE minute Steve Dawson was alive and happy. He had everything to live for—a sweetheart, a good job, and a future. But then suddenly Dawson found himself transported across the years, way ahead of that future, into the twenty-sixth century. By some miracle of science he had been catapulted into a Utopia!

And now, hurled into the future, Steve Dawson had nothing to live for! There was a shadow in this new-found Utopia, this super-civilized world. His sweetheart was now—dust! All that had bound him to life, all his friends, his cities, his world, were dissolved into gray dust. There was emptiness within Dawson's chest. He did not want to open his eyes. He wanted to remember yesterday.

But Steve Dawson finds new adventure and romance in Utopia. Adventure and romance that make Henry Kuttner's novel, **REMEMBER TOMORROW**, the outstanding science fiction classic of the year. This great story of a man of yesterday lost in a world of tomorrow is published complete in the special scientific novel section of the next **THRILLING WONDER STORIES**.

They were the greatest scientists in the Solar System, but no planet government would have them. A brilliant chemist... a famous biologist... a great physicist... and others. They were guilty—of the greatest crime in the worlds. So they banded together on desert Mars and formed a legion of dishonor. A legion dedicated to the conquest of science.

Arthur J. Burks tells you the unusual story of this strange scientific syndicate in **CITADEL OF SCIENCE**, a novelet of renegade powers. It's a thrilling novelet of a world of outlaws who could not exile the lure of science from their hearts.

Meteors! The greatest interplanetary hazard, the most lethal of all the dangers of space. Meteors—they've done a lot of things besides drilling holes in space ships, and making widows out of girls reckless enough to marry space men!

Raymond Z. Gallun, popular fantasy writer, tells you about the space pilots who wage an eternal war against meteors in **SECRET OF THE COMET**, a stirring novelet of the void. It's a tale of meteor menace, of the spatial pioneers who fought to make the ether lanes safe for interplanetary traffic.

Other distinctive stories by famous fantasy favorites in the next issue of **THRILLING WONDER STORIES**. And our regular star-parade of exclusive features.

ANSWERS TO SCIENCE QUIZ

(See Pages 52-53)

POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. True | 11. True |
| 2. False | 12. False |
| 3. True | 13. True |
| 4. True | 14. False |
| 5. False | 15. True |
| 6. False | 16. True |
| 7. True | 17. False |
| 8. True | 18. True |
| 9. True | 19. False |
| 10. False | 20. True |

TAKE A LETTER

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. b | 6. d |
| 2. a | 7. a |
| 3. c | 8. b |
| 4. b | 9. c |
| 5. d | 10. c |

WHAT'S MY PLANET?

Mars.

WHAT'S MY ELEMENT?

Gold.

DOUBLE OR NOTHING

1. Reaction. 2. Fauna. 3. Axle. 4. Petit.
5. Deimos. 6. Effect.

IT'S THE LAW

Prevost's Law
Boyle's Law
Dalton's Law
Hooke's Law
Lenz's Law
Kirchoff's Law
Charles' Law
Ohm's Law

Radiating bodies
Volume of air
Partial pressures
Strain and stress
Induced current
Closed circuits
Expansion of gases
Intensity of electric force

WHAT'S YOUR SCIENCE I.Q.?

After you've completed the **SCIENCE QUIZ** and checked your results with the correct answers, get a slide-rule and calculate your score. Here's how you rate:

- 75-84—Superman.
60-74—Mental Marvel.
45-59—B.B. (Bachelor of Bookworms).
30-44—Try Crossword Puzzles.
15-29—Stick to Fiction.
0-14—Absolute Zero.

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30x4.40-20	20	\$2.39	30x4.40-19	19	\$2.39
30x4.40-19	19	\$2.39	30x4.40-18	18	\$2.39
30x4.40-18	18	\$2.39	30x4.40-17	17	\$2.39
30x4.40-17	17	\$2.39	30x4.40-16	16	\$2.39
30x4.40-16	16	\$2.39	30x4.40-15	15	\$2.39
30x4.40-15	15	\$2.39	30x4.40-14	14	\$2.39
30x4.40-14	14	\$2.39	30x4.40-13	13	\$2.39
30x4.40-13	13	\$2.39	30x4.40-12	12	\$2.39
30x4.40-12	12	\$2.39	30x4.40-11	11	\$2.39
30x4.40-11	11	\$2.39	30x4.40-10	10	\$2.39
30x4.40-10	10	\$2.39	30x4.40-9	9	\$2.39
30x4.40-9	9	\$2.39	30x4.40-8	8	\$2.39
30x4.40-8	8	\$2.39	30x4.40-7	7	\$2.39
30x4.40-7	7	\$2.39	30x4.40-6	6	\$2.39
30x4.40-6	6	\$2.39	30x4.40-5	5	\$2.39
30x4.40-5	5	\$2.39	30x4.40-4	4	\$2.39
30x4.40-4	4	\$2.39	30x4.40-3	3	\$2.39
30x4.40-3	3	\$2.39	30x4.40-2	2	\$2.39
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30x4.40-20	20	\$2.39	30x4.40-19	19	\$2.39
30x4.40-19	19	\$2.39	30x4.40-18	18	\$2.39
30x4.40-18	18	\$2.39	30x4.40-17	17	\$2.39
30x4.40-17	17	\$2.39	30x4.40-16	16	\$2.39
30x4.40-16	16	\$2.39	30x4.40-15	15	\$2.39
30x4.40-15	15	\$2.39	30x4.40-14	14	\$2.39
30x4.40-14	14	\$2.39	30x4.40-13	13	\$2.39
30x4.40-13	13	\$2.39	30x4.40-12	12	\$2.39
30x4.40-12	12	\$2.39	30x4.40-11	11	\$2.39
30x4.40-11	11	\$2.39	30x4.40-10	10	\$2.39
30x4.40-10	10	\$2.39	30x4.40-9	9	\$2.39
30x4.40-9	9	\$2.39	30x4.40-8	8	\$2.39
30x4.40-8	8	\$2.39	30x4.40-7	7	\$2.39
30x4.40-7	7	\$2.39	30x4.40-6	6	\$2.39
30x4.40-6	6	\$2.39	30x4.40-5	5	\$2.39
30x4.40-5	5	\$2.39	30x4.40-4	4	\$2.39
30x4.40-4	4	\$2.39	30x4.40-3	3	\$2.39
30x4.40-3	3	\$2.39	30x4.40-2	2	\$2.39
30x4.40-2	2	\$2.39	30x4.40-1	1	\$2.39

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30x4.40-19	19	\$2.39	30x4.40-19	19	\$3.49
30x4.40-18	18	\$2.39	30x4.40-18	18	\$3.49
30x4.40-17	17	\$2.39	30x4.40-17	17	\$3.49
30x4.40-16	16	\$2.39	30x4.40-16	16	\$3.49
30x4.40-15	15	\$2.39	30x4.40-15	15	\$3.49
30x4.40-14	14	\$2.39	30x4.40-14	14	\$3.49
30x4.40-13	13	\$2.39	30x4.40-13	13	\$3.49
30x4.40-12	12	\$2.39	30x4.40-12	12	\$3.49
30x4.40-11	11	\$2.39	30x4.40-11	11	\$3.49
30x4.40-10	10	\$2.39	30x4.40-10	10	\$3.49
30x4.40-9	9	\$2.39	30x4.40-9	9	\$3.49
30x4.40-8	8	\$2.39	30x4.40-8	8	\$3.49
30x4.40-7	7	\$2.39	30x4.40-7	7	\$3.49
30x4.40-6	6	\$2.39	30x4.40-6	6	\$3.49
30x4.40-5	5	\$2.39	30x4.40-5	5	\$3.49
30x4.40-4	4	\$2.39	30x4.40-4	4	\$3.49
30x4.40-3	3	\$2.39	30x4.40-3	3	\$3.49
30x4.40-2	2	\$2.39	30x4.40-2	2	\$3.49
30x4.40-1	1	\$2.39	30x4.40-1	1	\$3.49

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30x4.40-19	19	\$2.39	30x4.40-19	19	\$3.49
30x4.40-18	18	\$2.39	30x4.40-18	18	\$3.49
30x4.40-17	17	\$2.39	30x4.40-17	17	\$3.49
30x4.40-16	16	\$2.39	30x4.40-16	16	\$3.49
30x4.40-15	15	\$2.39	30x4.40-15	15	\$3.49
30x4.40-14	14	\$2.39	30x4.40-14	14	\$3.49
30x4.40-13	13	\$2.39	30x4.40-13	13	\$3.49
30x4.40-12	12	\$2.39	30x4.40-12	12	\$3.49
30x4.40-11	11	\$2.39	30x4.40-11	11	\$3.49
30x4.40-10	10	\$2.39	30x4.40-10	10	\$3.49
30x4.40-9	9	\$2.39	30x4.40-9	9	\$3.49
30x4.40-8	8	\$2.39	30x4.40-8	8	\$3.49
30x4.40-7	7	\$2.39	30x4.40-7	7	\$3.49
30x4.40-6	6	\$2.39	30x4.40-6	6	\$3.49
30x4.40-5	5	\$2.39	30x4.40-5	5	\$3.49
30x4.40-4	4	\$2.39	30x4.40-4	4	\$3.49
30x4.40-3	3	\$2.39	30x4.40-3	3	\$3.49
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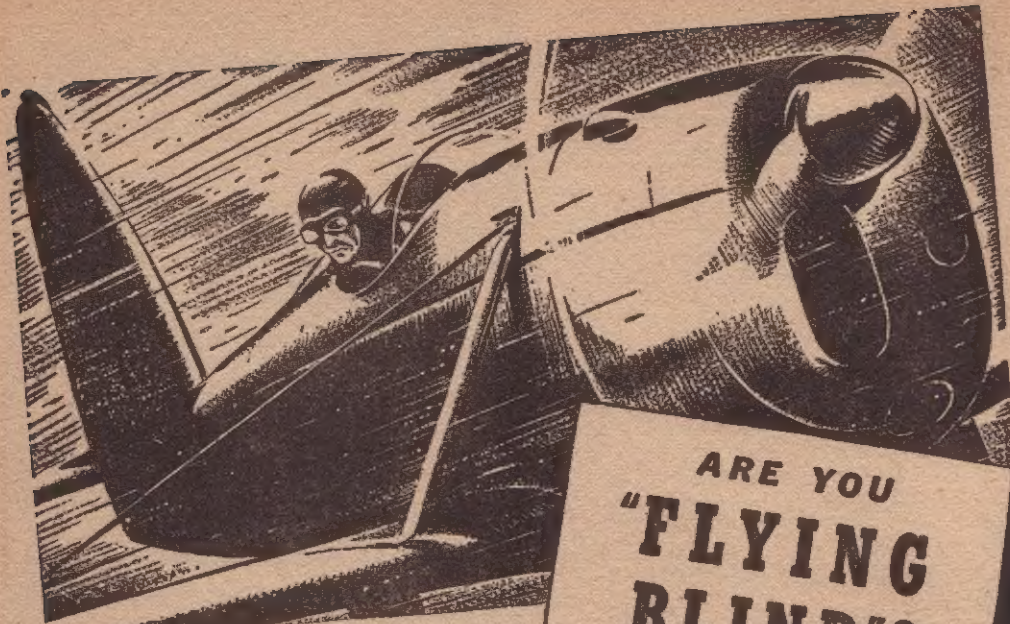
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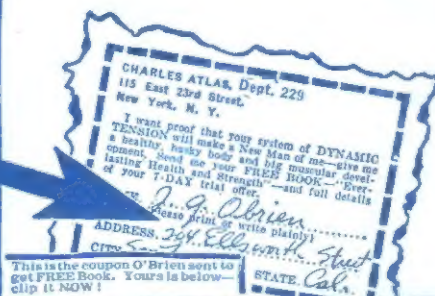
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IS YOUR Rupture GETTING Worse?

It is a terrible thing to feel that your rupture is getting worse, growing larger and larger, without your *seeming* to be able to do anything about it! Haunting fear destroys mental poise and makes many *despondent*. Inability to be active takes the *physical joys* out of life.

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STOP IT, STOP IT!

AS sure as you live and breathe, if you have a reducible rupture, you can *stop your rupture worries* and once again find the world, your work, your pleasures so full of joy and happiness that you will be an utterly new person . . . alive, vivid, energetic and happy past all the old nightmare fears that have been making your existence a bad dream.

There is no claptrap magic about the famous Brooks Air-Cushion Rupture Appliance. It isn't something experimental. It has been used and improved for years. Over 9000 doctors (who know about rupture)

wear the BROOKS, or recommend it to many, many thousands of patients. What is the Patented Automatic Air-Cushion? Just this.

It is the part of the BROOKS Appliance that holds back your rupture—the most important part of any truss. It is a yielding, air-filled rubber chamber designed to a shape that clings, that holds with complete security *without gouging in*. Understand that—*without gouging in*! Ill-fitting, incorrectly designed trusses, as you know all too well, *do gouge in*.

Now here is what happens. The Brooks Air-Cushion *avoids* spreading the rupture opening and making it larger, the way some trusses do. Well, when the BROOKS permits the edges of the rupture opening to remain as

close together as possible, Nature has the best chance to step in and close the opening. Mind you we don't guarantee this. But if you have reducible rupture, the BROOKS is designed to work with nature. And thousands of BROOKS users have reported the abandonment of any truss.

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The very day you put on a BROOKS Patented Air-Cushion, you feel that you have *been* reborn to the full joys of life! Men, women and children can know this indescribable thrill. Now why—why does the BROOKS give you such exceptional results? Why is it so often most outstanding

in its accomplishments? Because the cling of the Air-Cushion makes it hold as nothing else can . . . because the wearer speedily comes to realize that there can be no slipping to let the rupture down . . . that while the BROOKS protects, the dreaded specter of strangulation is banished . . . because the wearer can indulge in every normal activity . . . because physical tasks can be resumed . . . because common sense says that everything humanly possible is being accomplished to improve the rupture condition. And here is another "because," a tremendous one to those who have suffered with the miseries of a hard, gouging, burning, galling pad that never lets up, never is forgotten. Your BROOKS will have no springs, no metal girdle, no agonizing pressure devices. Instead there is the utterly comfortable Air-Cushion and a velvet soft body band.

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That's one of the best parts of all. You don't have to risk your money to find out just what joy and happiness a BROOKS CAN BRING YOU! You simply try it, and if not satisfied the trial costs you *nothing*! And anyone can afford a BROOKS. It costs no more than ordinary trusses. Every BROOKS is made to individual requirements, made especially to fit *your case*. Therefore it is *never sold in stores*. Guard against imitations. SEND THE COUPON AT ONCE.

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Street

City State

State whether for Man ☐, Woman ☐, or Child ☐.

WRONG

Hard pad gouging in keeps Rupture open and prevents natural healing.

RIGHT

BROOKS Air-Cushion does not spread rupture opening. Gives nature a real opportunity!